

*A New Reference Grammar of
Modern Spanish*

*A New
Reference Grammar
of Modern Spanish*

Second Edition

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Edward Arnold

A member of the Hodder Headline Group
LONDON NEW YORK MELBOURNE AUCKLAND

© 1988, 1994 John Butt and Carmen Benjamin

First published in Great Britain 1988

Second edition published 1994

Distributed in the USA by Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Available upon request

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Butt, John, 1943–

A new reference grammar of modern Spanish/John Butt, Carmen Benjamin. — 2nd ed.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p.499) and index.

ISBN-13: 978-1-4615-8370-7

e-ISBN-13: 978-1-4615-8368-4

DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4615-8368-4

1. Spanish language—Grammar.

I. Benjamin, Carmen. II. Title.

PC4112.B88 1994

468.2'421—dc20

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Typeset in 10/12 pt. Palatino by Anneset, Weston-super-Mare, Avon.

a division of Hodder Headline PLC,

338 Euston Road, London NW1 3BH. by St Edmundsbury Press, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk and Hartnolls Ltd., Bodmin, Cornwall.

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Preface to the first edition (abridged and revised)

This reference grammar offers intermediate and advanced students a reasonably comprehensive guide to the morphology and syntax of educated speech and plain prose in Spain and Latin America at the end of the twentieth century.

Spanish is the main, usually the sole official language of twenty-one countries,¹ and it is set fair to overtake English by the year 2000 in numbers of native speakers.² This vast geographical and political diversity ensures that Spanish is a good deal less unified than French, German or even English, the latter more or less internationally standardized according to either American or British norms.

Until the 1960s, the criteria of internationally correct Spanish were dictated by the *Real Academia Española*, but the prestige of this institution has now sunk so low that its most solemn decrees are hardly taken seriously – witness the fate of the spelling reforms listed in the *Nuevas normas de prosodia y ortografía*, which were supposed to come into force in all Spanish-speaking countries in 1959 and, nearly forty years later, are still selectively ignored by publishers and literate persons everywhere. The fact is that in Spanish ‘correctness’ is nowadays decided, as it is in all living languages, by the consensus of native speakers; but consensus about linguistic usage is obviously difficult to achieve between more than twenty independent, widely scattered and sometimes mutually hostile countries.

Peninsular Spanish is itself in flux. Since the end of Franco’s dictatorship in 1975 the language of the old Establishment has steadily yielded to a standard based on the speech of the new middle classes of Madrid, but this evolution has been resisted by purists and there are constant disputes about what constitutes correct Spanish.

¹ Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, The Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea (on the African Atlantic coast between Gabon and Cameroun), Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, El Salvador, Spain, Uruguay and Venezuela.

² English will continue to have more speakers for whom it is a *second* language. Chinese (Putonghua) has more native speakers than either, but it is geographically more restricted.

But it is above all the variety, vigour and constantly rising prestige of Latin-American Spanish that makes the task of lexicographers and grammarians difficult. The day is (or should be) long past when one could claim that the only variety of Spanish worth serious study and imitation is the standard language of Spain, which is based on the Castilian dialect of the North and Centre, a variety nowadays spoken by less than eight per cent of the Spanish-speaking world. But now that European Castilian has lost its standing as a pan-Hispanic model, no new model has replaced it and there is no longer any one national Spanish-speaking linguistic or cultural centre to which the other countries and regions defer. This absence of universally acknowledged pan-Hispanic linguistic norms will no doubt persist for the foreseeable future.

This is not to say that Spanish is no longer one language: anyone who knows one variety well can travel the Spanish-speaking world with no more problems of communication than would afflict Britons, Americans and Australians travelling in the various English-speaking countries – and probably less. But *at the level of detail*, i.e. at the level at which textbooks like this one must work, there are regional and national variations of vocabulary and, to a much lesser extent, syntax, that can be very disconcerting when it comes to laying down the law about what is ‘correct’ or recommended usage. These differences do not only separate European and ‘Latin-American’ Spanish. Strictly speaking, the latter does not exist: Mexican, Cuban, Colombian, Peruvian, Argentine and all the other national varieties differ from one another, above all in colloquial vocabulary, and the distance between, for example, Mexican and Argentine is probably as great as between Argentine and European Spanish.

This problem of diversity need not worry the beginner who is struggling with basic grammar and vocabulary, but it grows more acute as one advances beyond the intermediate level. It disheartens a foreign student to find that *Collins Spanish-English English-Spanish* dictionary gives twelve different national Latin-American meanings for the word *chivo* including ‘goat’, ‘sheep’, ‘goatee’, ‘bus’, ‘car’, ‘blanket’, ‘naughty girl’, ‘immoral woman’ and ‘knapsack’ (although any one Spanish-speaker will usually know only a few of these possible meanings). The dimensions of the problem become clearer when one reads headlines in a popular Peruvian daily like *Choros chupan tres palos a Cristal* (‘Thieves steal three million soles from Crystal Brewery’) or *Lorchos datean que los afilaron tres años* (‘Peruvians claim they were trained for three years’), language that baffles Argentines and Mexicans as much as Spaniards. This problem of variety must frequently perplex the fair-minded grammarian who can no more denounce as ‘incorrect’ a typical Latin-American sentence such as *Es con ella que quiero hablar* (‘It’s her that I want to talk to’, Spaniards insist on *Es con ella con la que quiero hablar*), than assert that *dentro de* is the ‘correct’ Spanish for ‘inside’ when a writer as famous as Borges uses the form *adentro de* – unacceptable to Spaniards.

Many textbooks of Spanish sidestep this problem of diversity by ignoring or understating the variety of Latin-American usage or by confining their discussion to a colourless pan-Hispanic *lingua franca* of the sort found in *Selecciones del Reader’s Digest*, a language stripped of all the colloquialisms and regionalisms that give everyday Spanish its immense vigour and charm.

We reject both of these solutions and have adopted the working method of illustrating as many important points as possible with Latin-American examples which, except where stated, seem to us also to be good European Spanish and therefore indicative of what one assumes is international Spanish usage. We hope that this method will give readers a sense of authentic Spanish and also do justice to the status of Latin-American language.

Despite this, it is certain that some of our everyday Peninsular examples will amuse or puzzle readers from the Americas. We apologize for this, and we hope that the spirit of this grammar is as pan-Hispanic as it can be in the face of the ultimately irreconcilable claims of all the subtly different national and regional varieties of the language.

We often quote familiar dialogue from plays and novels as well as extracts from a range of texts, including the press and popular material like cookery books, leisure and hobby magazines and occasionally spontaneous utterances by native speakers. The fact that some of these sources are not usually considered to be linguistically prestigious does not mean that all their language is necessarily corrupt: all our examples are good Spanish except where stated. The alternative would have been to quote only elegant literary texts by famous authors or the editorials of one or two up-market newspapers, and this would have given a false picture of the language.

As far as possible we indicate whether the language described is formal, colloquial, familiar or popular. Foreign students will constantly hear colloquial and popular forms, but pending real fluency in the language they should use them – especially popular forms – with caution. In any language some things that pass unnoticed in relaxed native speech sound shocking when spoken with a foreign accent.

With rare exceptions, examples of written language are taken from texts published since the 1960s, many of them from the 1980s and 1990s. Severe problems of space have obliged us to omit historical considerations. The grammar also concentrates on syntactic and morphological questions: lexical issues such as word formation (except diminutive and other affective suffixes) are barely discussed, mainly because of acute lack of space, but also because teaching foreigners how to coin new words encourages badly-formed vocabulary.

The approach and terminology of the grammar are conservative and points are often clarified by example rather than by theoretical argument, which is kept to a minimum. The fact that we use traditional terms like 'subject', 'object', 'indirect object', 'demonstratives', etc. does not mean that we are completely ignorant of the unscientific nature of such labels. But to speak of 'nominals', 'disjuncts', 'deictics' and so on would frighten off the type of reader we have in mind. Words and constructions are discussed under those headings by which readers unfamiliar with modern linguistic terms will most easily recognize them.

We assume that readers have a native knowledge of English, and explanations have been drastically shortened by reference to English wherever the languages seem to coincide. Since interference from French and occasionally Italian and Portuguese is a perennial problem for teachers of Spanish, sporadic mention of these languages is made in order to emphasize some peculiarity of Spanish.

Acknowledgments

Like everyone in the field, we are indebted to the labours of Andrés Bello, María Moliner, Ramsey and Spaulding, Manuel Seco and other eminent grammarians and lexicographers. Of the works mentioned in the bibliography, we have drawn heavily on E. García (1975) and C.E. Kany (Chicago, 1945, reprinted and translated into Spanish). Three other works often provided information, explanations and insights: R. Quirk et al. (1972), A. Judge and F.G. Healey (1983), and the first edition of A.E. Hammer (1971), perusal of which originally inspired the present work.

A very large number of Spanish speakers from many countries have helped us and we cannot name them all. Our sincere thanks go to every one: without them we could not have finished. We are, however, heavily indebted to Antonia Moreira and María Álvarez for their thoughtful opinions on Peninsular usage; to Sheila Hague for her valuable criticisms of the proofs; to Lynn Ingamells of Queen Mary College, London who generously read and commented on the first draft; to Steve Jones and to his Colombian wife Candy, whose protests often reminded us that Peninsular Spanish is but one variety among many, and to Professor Alan Paterson of St Andrew's University whose kind words of encouragement raised morale at critical moments more, perhaps, than he realized.

Despite all this invaluable assistance we are acutely aware that a book of this nature must contain mistakes, omissions and inaccuracies for which we alone assume responsibility.

John Butt
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Preface to the second edition

We have rewritten several chapters and made numerous additions and clarifications in most of the others. A number of new chapters are included, on the Imperative, Expressions of time, Existential sentences (i.e. ways of saying 'there is/'there are'), and on Modal Auxiliaries like *haber*, *deber*, *poder*, etc. Verbs meaning 'to become' are now discussed in a separate chapter, as is the vexed question of the difference between the pronouns *le* and *lo*.

English translations are shown more systematically than in the first edition, except in a few obvious cases and in some long lists of verbs. A number of footnotes have been added with items of interest or information about the language that are often missing from dictionaries. The appendix on pronunciation has been deleted: it contained nothing that cannot be found in countless beginners' course-books.

We have included more Mexican examples, since this, the most populous Spanish-speaking country, was under-represented in the first edition. In this regard John Butt thanks Professor David Hook for arranging, and King's College, London for granting assistance towards a journey to Mexico in Autumn 1992. In connection with the Latin-American examples, we should point out that a remark like 'in Spain the word used is . . .' does not exclude the possibility that what we know is good European usage is also current in some or all of the American republics: it is clearly impossible to check every fact country by country.

The term 'Spanish America(n)', which irritates some Latin Americans, has been replaced by 'Latin America(n)'. It should be obvious that we are talking about Latin-American Spanish and not the continent's other Latin-based languages.

In response to several complaints, the Argentine author Ernesto Sábato has been given back his accent, despite the fact that many publishers print his name Sabato, Italian-style.

The success of this book in the USA raised problems of trans-Atlantic variety in English that were more troublesome than we foresaw: a number of American readers questioned our British spelling, punctuation and idiom. In this new edition we have made an effort to avoid (insofar as Britons can) what seems to be exclusively British usage, and we include American equivalents of British words that we think may cause confusion across the Atlantic.

We again owe heartfelt thanks to numerous readers, colleagues, friends and students who helped us with their remarks and criticisms, especially to Professors Steven L. Hartman and Leo Hickey, to Carmen Gleadow and

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María Brown. We are again much indebted to Antonia Moreira for her unfailing interest and numerous invaluable comments.

Once more we declare that we alone are responsible for any omissions or errors.

London, 1994

Conventions, spelling and abbreviations

**El mujer*: a preceding asterisk marks a form that is not Spanish. It is occasionally also used for forms that may be heard but are very aberrant.

?*Se puso detrás mío*, ?*Se los dije*: a preceding uninverted question mark shows that a form is doubtful or disputed and not accepted by all speakers.

'Colloquial' describes forms that are accepted in spontaneous educated speech but are usually avoided in formal speech or writing, e.g. *Si tuviera dinero me compraba un piso* 'If I had some money I'd buy a flat/apartment' for *me compraría un piso*.

'Familiar' describes forms that are commonly heard in spontaneous speech, e.g. ?*el chico que fui con él* 'the boy I went with' (i.e. *el chico con el que fui*), but should be avoided or used with great caution by foreign learners.

'Popular' describes commonly-heard forms that may be stigmatized as uneducated, for example ?*Habían muchos* for *Había muchos* 'There were lots of them'.

Forms separated by / are alternatives, either alternatives that have different meanings but use the same construction, e.g. *yo sé/él sabe* 'I know'/'(s)he knows', or alternative ways of saying the same thing, e.g. *antes de que/antes que* 'before'.

Words in round brackets may be optionally deleted with no or only slight effect on meaning or style, e.g. *con tal (de) que* 'provided that'.

The European equivalents of distinctly Latin-American forms are noted, e.g. *el plomero* (Spain *el fontanero*) 'plumber', but Latin-American equivalents of European forms are not systematically shown. It would be beyond the scope of this, and probably of any book, to list every national or regional Latin-American equivalent of words used in Spain.

Except where stated otherwise, all examples represent usage worthy of imitation by foreigners. The Latin-American quotations are also good European Spanish unless stated otherwise. Latin-American texts published outside their author's home country may have been 'normalized' by editors, particularly in the case of the numerous famous Latin-American novels published in Spain.

Words that represent the speech of fictional characters are marked 'dialogue' to show that they reflect spoken usage and to avoid their language being attributed to their author.

The spelling of Spanish words follows the original text or, in the case of

unattributed examples, the Academy's rules laid down in the *Nuevas normas de prosodia y ortografía* of 1959, although we follow general usage where this is clearly at odds with the Academy's prescriptions. In the cases of the word *sólo/solo* 'only'/'alone' and of the demonstrative pronouns *este/éste*, *ese/ése*, *aquel/aqué*, modern written usage usually flouts the Academy's rules and we show both forms.

The spellings *México*, *mexicano* are used throughout for *Méjico*, *mejicano* on the grounds that Mexicans prefer them, as does the prestigious Spanish daily *El País*.

The English used throughout is British, although we try to indicate US usage where confusion may arise (e.g. 'lecturer'/(US) 'professor', etc.). British habits will be particularly obvious in the punctuation (particularly our habit of writing punctuation outside inverted commas), in certain spellings, in the writing of dates,¹ and most of all in the translations of colloquial Spanish, where our colloquial British will sometimes puzzle or amuse North Americans.

Grammar books constantly make even the simplest language ambiguous by quoting it out of context. This problem is severe in a language like Spanish which regularly omits subject pronouns and does not systematically mark sex, number or person in its object pronouns. Thus *Se lo daba* can mean 'I gave it to her/him/them/you', 'He/she gave it to him/her/them/you', 'You (*usted*) gave it to him/her/them/you', '(S)he gave it to himself/herself', and so on. One cannot show all of the possibilities each time, but the temptation to translate such sentences always using masculine English pronouns is misleading and possibly shows sexual bias. For this reason we often use English feminine forms in the translations, if only to recall that a native Spanish-speaker does not automatically form a mental picture of a man on hearing the verb *tosió* '(S)he/you/it coughed', and to remind readers that, out of context, there is no special reason for translating *Habla ruso* as 'He speaks Russian' rather than 'She speaks Russian' or 'You speak Russian'.

The following abbreviations are used:

Esbozo	Real Academia de la Lengua, <i>Esbozo de una nueva gramática de la lengua española</i> (Madrid 1973)
lit.	'literally', 'literal translation'
<i>Nuevas normas</i>	<i>Nuevas normas de prosodia y ortografía. Nuevo texto definitivo</i> (Madrid 1959)
Lat. Am.	Latin America(n)

¹ E.g. 10 July 1998 = North American 7-10-1998, European 10-7-1998.

I

Gender of nouns

1.1 General

All nouns in Spanish are either masculine or feminine in gender, except for one or two nouns of undecided gender. There are no Spanish nouns of neuter gender, but there are some neuter pronouns: see Chapter 7.

Discussion of the gender of Spanish nouns is clarified by dividing nouns into two groups:

(a) nouns that refer to human beings or to domesticated animals, and also a few well-known wild animals. These are discussed in 1.2.

(b) nouns that refer to inanimate things or to plants, or to the animals not included in 1.2. These are discussed in 1.3 and 1.4.

1.2 Nouns referring to human beings and domesticated animals (and a few wild animals)

Nouns referring to male human beings or to male domesticated animals and to the male of a few well-known wild animals such as wolves, lions, tigers, elephants, bears and foxes, are almost always masculine, and those referring to females are feminine.

This remark is not as obvious as it seems: the gender of such nouns is more biological in Spanish than in French where *le professeur* or *le docteur* can be a woman and *la recrue* 'recruit' can be a man, or in Italian where a policeman may be *la guardia* (forms like *la recluta*, *la centinela* used to be applied to men in Golden-Age Spanish, but one now says *el recluta* for a male recruit, *la recluta* for a female). However, a few Spanish nouns of fixed gender, e.g. *la víctima*, *la celebridad*, *el ligue* may refer to both males and females: see 1.2.11 for a selection.

1.2.1 Special forms for male and female

Some nouns have special forms for the male and female which must be learnt separately. The following list is not exhaustive:

<i>el abad</i>	<i>la abadesa</i>	abbot/abbess
<i>el actor</i>	<i>la actriz</i>	actor/actress
<i>el barón</i>	<i>la baronesa</i>	baron/baroness
<i>el caballo</i>	<i>la yegua</i>	stallion/mare
<i>el carnero</i>	<i>la oveja.*</i>	ram/ewe
<i>el conde</i>	<i>la condesa</i>	count/countess
<i>el duque</i>	<i>la duquesa</i>	duke/duchess

2 Gender of nouns

<i>el emperador</i>	<i>la emperatriz</i>	emperor/empress
<i>el gallo</i>	<i>la gallina**</i>	cockerel/hen
<i>el héroe</i>	<i>la heroína</i>	hero/heroine (or heroin)
<i>el jabalí</i>	<i>la jabalina</i>	wild boar/wild sow
<i>el marido</i>	<i>la mujer</i>	husband/wife (or woman)
<i>el padre</i>	<i>la madre</i>	father/mother
<i>el príncipe</i>	<i>la princesa</i>	prince/princess
<i>el rey</i>	<i>la reina</i>	king/queen
<i>el sacerdote</i>	<i>la sacerdotisa</i>	priest/priestess
<i>el toro</i>	<i>la vaca</i>	bull/cow
<i>el yerno</i>	<i>la nuera</i>	son-in-law/daughter-in law
	(<i>la yerna</i> is heard in parts of Lat. Am.)	
<i>el varón</i> ¹ (<i>el macho</i>)	<i>la hembra</i>	male/female
<i>el zar</i>	<i>la zarina</i>	Tsar/Tsarina

Note

** A feminine form which is also used for the species in general. Normally the masculine is the generic form: *los caballos* = 'horses' as well as 'stallions'.

1.2.2 Feminine of nouns ending in -o

The great majority of nouns referring to human beings or to the animals included in this group make their feminine in -a:

<i>el abuelo</i>	<i>la abuela</i>	grandfather/ grandmother	<i>el novio</i>	<i>la novia</i>	boyfriend/ girlfriend
<i>el amigo</i>	<i>la amiga</i>	friend	<i>el oso</i>	<i>la osa</i>	bear/she-bear
<i>el candidato</i>	<i>la candidata</i>	candidate	<i>el perro</i>	<i>la perra</i>	dog/bitch
<i>el ganso</i>	<i>la gansa</i>	gander/goose	<i>el tío</i>	<i>la tía</i>	uncle/aunt
<i>el gato</i>	<i>la gata</i>	cat	<i>el zorro</i>	<i>la zorra</i>	fox/vixen
<i>el hermano</i>	<i>la hermana</i>	brother/sister	etc.		

But some words denoting professions or activities are invariable in form, and the sex of the person referred to is shown by an article or adjective:

<i>el/la modelo</i>	model; <i>modelos francesas</i> 'female French models'	<i>el/la soprano</i>	soprano
<i>el/la piloto</i>	pilot/racing driver	<i>el/la testigo</i>	witness (<i>la testiga</i> is popular Spanish)
<i>el/la reo</i>	accused (in court)		
<i>el/la soldado</i>	soldier; <i>una soldado israelí</i> 'an Israeli woman soldier'		

Others, like *el médico/la médica*, 'doctor' are controversial. See 1.2.7 for a discussion.

1.2.3 Feminine of nouns ending in -or, -ón, -ín, -és

Nouns referring to members of this group and ending in -or, -ón, -ín and -és make their feminine in -a:

<i>el asesor</i>	<i>la asesora</i>	adviser/ consultant	<i>el anfitrión</i>	<i>la anfitriona</i>	host/hostess
			<i>el bailarín</i>	<i>la bailarina</i>	dancer

¹ *El varón* = human male; *el macho* = male of other animals.

<i>el burgués</i>	<i>la burguesa</i>	bourgeois/	<i>el león</i>	<i>la leona</i>	lion/lioness
<i>el campeón</i>	<i>la campeona</i>	bourgeoise	<i>el profesor</i>	<i>la profesora</i>	teacher
<i>el doctor</i>	<i>la doctora</i>	champion	<i>el programador</i>	<i>la programadora</i>	programmer
		doctor	etc.		

Notes

(i) Adjectives (which in Spanish can almost always double as nouns) ending in *-és* make their feminine in *-a*: *el francés/la francesa* 'Frenchman'/'Frenchwoman'. The only important exception is *cortés/descortés* 'courteous'/'discourteous' (masc. and fem. singular; the plural is *(des)corteses*). Adjectives are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

(ii) *El/la peatón* 'pedestrian' seems to be the only invariable noun in *-ón*: *La peatón recibió graves heridas* (*La Voz de Galicia*, Spain, confirmed by native informants) 'The woman pedestrian received severe injuries'.

1.2.4 Nouns ending in *-a*

These are invariable:

<i>el/la artista</i>	artist	<i>el/la espía</i>	spy
<i>el/la astronauta</i>	astronaut	<i>el/la guía</i>	guide (<i>la guía</i> also 'guide book')
<i>el/la atleta</i>	athlete		
<i>el/la camarada</i>	comrade	<i>el/la nómada</i>	nomad
<i>el/la colega</i>	colleague/workmate	etc.	

Occasional uneducated masculine forms in *-isto* are heard. *El modisto* 'fashion designer' is well-established in everyday Peninsular usage: *Todo las separa, los lazos de sangre, el destino, e incluso los modistos* (*El Mundo*, Madrid) 'Everything stands between them, blood ties, fate and even fashion designers'. Manuel Seco and *El País* recommend *el/la modista*.

1.2.5 Feminine of nouns ending in *-nte*

The majority are invariable:

<i>el/la adolescente</i>	adolescent	<i>el/la creyente</i>	believer
<i>el/la agente</i>	police officer/agent	<i>el/la descendiente</i>	descendant
<i>el/la amante</i>	lover	<i>el/la representante</i>	representative
<i>el/la cantante</i>	singer	etc.	

But a few feminine forms in *-nta* are in standard use (at least in Spain; they may be unacceptable in parts of Latin America):

<i>el acompañante/la acompañanta</i>	companion/escort
<i>el asistente/la asistentta</i>	valet/daily help
<i>el comediante/la comedianta</i>	'actor'/'actress' ²
<i>el dependiente/la dependienta</i>	shop assistant/(US) sales clerk
<i>el gigante/la giganta</i>	giant
<i>el infante/la infanta</i>	royal prince/princess
<i>el pariente/la parienta</i>	relative
<i>el principiante/la principianta</i>	beginner
<i>el sirviente/la sirvienta</i>	servant

² These words tend to be derogatory in Peninsular usage, particularly the feminine: *¡Qué comediante/la eres!* 'What an act you put on!' Polite forms are *actor cómico/actriz cómica* 'comic actor'.

4 Gender of nouns

In general, the tendency to form the feminine in *-nta* may spread, although forms like **la estudianta* for *la estudiante* 'female student' are considered substandard. There are a few popular nouns/adjectives that form a feminine in *-nta*: *el golfante/la golfanta* 'lout'/'good-for-nothing', *el atorrante/la atorranta* (Lat. Am.) 'tramp'/(US) 'bum'/'slacker'.

Note

The following also occur, the invariable form being more formal: *el/la asistente social* 'social worker' (also *la asistenta social*), *el/la cliente*, 'customer' (familiarily *la clienta*), *el/la presidente*, 'president' (also *la presidenta*, which Seco recommends).

1.2.6 Feminine of nouns ending in -e or a consonant

Apart from those already mentioned, these are mostly invariable:

<i>el/la alférez</i>	subaltern	<i>el/la rehén</i>	hostage
<i>el/la enlace</i>	union representative/ (British) shop steward	<i>el/la mártir</i>	martyr
<i>el/la intérprete</i>	interpreter	<i>el/la médium</i>	(spiritualist) medium
<i>el/la líder</i>	(political) leader	<i>el/la tigre (la tigresa</i>	tiger
<i>el/la joven</i>	young man/woman	is heard)	
		etc.	

But *el huésped/la huésped* 'guest' (also *la huésped*), *el monje/la monja* 'monk'/'nun', *el sastre/la sastra* 'tailor'. For *la jefa* see 1.2.7.

1.2.7 Feminine of nouns referring to professions

Like other Latin-based languages, Spanish is afflicted with the relatively new problem of what title to use for professional women. Until quite recently feminine forms of professional or educational titles had pejorative or comic overtones or denoted the wife of the male, cf. *el bachiller* (someone who has passed the equivalent of the baccalaureat or pre-university examination), *la bachillera* 'blue stocking' (i.e. a woman sneered at for being too intellectual), *el sargento/la sargenta* 'sergeant'/'battle-axe' (i.e. a fierce woman), *el general/la generala* 'general'/'the general's wife'.

In parts of the Spanish-speaking world, especially in Spain, a lingering stigma still attaches to the feminine form of words referring to professionals, so formal language tends to show respect by using the masculine form with a feminine article, e.g. *el/la abogado* 'lawyer'/'legal counsel' (*la abogada*, originally 'intercessionary saint', is however now widespread for a woman lawyer).

Further examples (the comments reflect usage in Spain; the feminine forms may be more acceptable in Latin America):

el/la catedrático 'professor'.³ *La catedrática* is gaining ground, but is often avoided when addressing the woman concerned;

el juez/la jueza 'judge'. In Spain, *la juez* is used in formal language; *El País* insists on it. *La jueza* may still mean 'the judge's wife' in rural usage;

el/la médico 'doctor'. *La médica* is spreading and is considered normal in

³ *El catedrático* = 'professor' in the European sense, i.e. someone who occupies a university chair or *cátedra* and is usually, but not always, chairperson of the department. US 'professor' = *profesor universitario*.

much of Latin America, cf. *una médica blanca sudafricana* (*Granma*, Cuba) 'a white South-African female doctor', but it is thought disrespectful by many speakers of European Spanish. *Doctora* is, however, normal as a form of address;

el/la miembro 'member' (of clubs). *El socio* is said of men and *la socio* sometimes of women, but *la socia* is avoided, in Spain if not elsewhere, because it may be slang for prostitute;

el/la ministro 'minister' is common, but *la ministra* is increasingly acceptable. Both *la primer ministro* and *la primera ministra* are used for a woman prime minister. The former is more common, although *El País* and Manuel Seco both recommend *la primera ministra*.

In much of Latin America *la jefa* is an accepted feminine of *el/la jefe* 'boss', but it may sound disrespectful in Spain.

Other nouns in *-o* may be regular: *el arquitecto/la arquitecta* 'architect', *el biólogo/la bióloga* 'biologist', *el filósofo/la filósofa* 'philosopher', *el letrado/la letrada* 'counsel'/'legal representative', *el político/la política* 'politician', *el sociólogo/la socióloga* 'sociologist', etc. Nevertheless, forms like *la arquitecto*, *la filósofo*, *la letrado* may be preferred in Spain and are common in respectful language.

Very often the feminine form is only used when the woman referred to is not present: *¿Qué tal te llevas con la nueva jefa?* 'How are you getting on with your new woman boss?', but *Me han dicho que usted es la jefa del departamento* 'They tell me that you are the head of the department'.

1.2.8 Nouns referring to mixed groups of males and females

With rare exceptions (some noted at 1.2.1), the masculine plural denotes either a group of males, or of males and females:

<i>los ingleses</i>	English men/the English	<i>los profesores</i>	men teachers/teachers in general
<i>los niños</i>	little boys/children	<i>los reyes</i>	kings/the kings and queens
<i>los padres</i>	fathers/parents		etc.
<i>los perros</i>	male dogs/dogs in general		

Since masculine plural nouns indicate either males or mixed groups and feminine nouns refer only to females, use of the masculine noun is obligatory in sentences like *No tengo más amigos que mujeres* 'The only friends I have are women' or *Todos los profesores son mujeres* 'All the teachers are women'. **No tengo más amigas que mujeres* would have the absurd meaning 'The only female friends I have are women'.

Care must also be taken with words like *uno, otro*. If a woman from Madrid says *Todos los madrileños me caen gordos* 'All the people from Madrid get on my nerves' one could reply *¡Pero tú eres uno de ellos!* 'But you're one of them!'⁴, but not *...*una de ellos*, since *madrileños* includes both males and females.

Compare

Ana es una de las profesoras

Ana is one of the women teachers

⁴ Though *Pero ¡tú eres madrileña también!* 'But you're from Madrid too!' avoids the problem.

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and

Ana es uno de los profesores

Ana is one of the teachers (who include males)

However, this principle is not applied consistently. In sentences like the following, use of the feminine noun does not necessarily exclude males:

María es la mejor profesora del instituto

Maria's the best teacher in the school
(may or may not include males)

*Emilia Pardo Bazán es la mejor intérprete
de la vida rural de toda la literatura española
del siglo XIX*

Emilia Pardo Bazán is the best interpreter
of rural life in the whole of 19th-century
Spanish literature

For this reason, ambiguity must be removed in sentences like *Emilia Pardo Bazán es la mayor novelista femenina española del siglo pasado* 'Emilia Pardo Bazán is the greatest Spanish woman novelist of the last century'.

In some cases usage seems uncertain. A woman might say either *Unos están a favor y otros en contra. Yo soy de las que están a favor* or . . . *de los que están a favor* 'Some are for, others are against. I'm one of those who are for it'.

1.2.9 Gender of inanimate nouns when applied to humans

Feminine nouns applied to male humans may acquire masculine gender:

<i>la cámara</i>	camera	<i>el cámara</i>	camera man
<i>la piel</i>	skin	<i>el piel roja</i>	redskin
<i>la primera clase</i>	first class	<i>un primera clase</i>	someone first-class
<i>la superventa</i>	top sale	<i>el superventa</i>	top seller (male)
<i>la trompeta</i>	trumpet	<i>el trompeta</i>	trumpet-player
etc.			

The reverse case is better avoided: *la que toca la trompeta* 'the woman playing the trumpet', not *la trompeta*, which is the instrument.

1.2.10 Gender of names applied across sex boundaries

A female name applied to a male acquires masculine gender: *Tú eres un Margaret Thatcher* 'You're a Margaret Thatcher' (said to a man of his right-wing political ideas). But men's names usually remain masculine: *María, tú eres un Hitler con faldas* 'Maria, you're a female Hitler' (lit. 'Hitler in skirts').

1.2.11 Nouns of invariable gender applied to either sex

The following are some common words which, although applied to human beings, do not change their gender. One says *El bebé está enfermo* 'The baby is ill', whatever its sex⁵:

<i>el ángel</i>	angel	<i>el genio</i>	genius
<i>el bebé</i>	baby	<i>el ligue</i>	'date'/casual boy or girlfriend
<i>la celebridad</i>	celebrity	<i>la persona</i>	person
<i>el desastre</i>	'disaster'	<i>el personaje</i>	character (in novels, etc.)
<i>el esperpento</i>	'fright'/weird-looking person	<i>la víctima</i>	victim
<i>la estrella</i>	star (TV, etc.)		

⁵ *Bebé* is considered to be a Gallicism in Spain and *niño/niña* are more common in everyday speech.

and a few other words, most involving sexual innuendo or comparisons with objects, cf. *el pendón* ‘trollop’ (lit. ‘pennant’), *el marimacho* ‘tom-boy’, etc.

Note

The titles *Alteza* ‘Highness’, *Excelencia*, *Ilustrísima* ‘Grace’, (title of bishops) and *Majestad* ‘Majesty’ are feminine, but the person addressed keeps his/her gender: *Su Majestad estará cansado* (to king), ‘Your Majesty must be tired’.

1.3 Nouns referring to animals not included under 1.2.1–1.2.11

Nouns that refer to animals not included in the preceding sections – i.e. to most wild animals – are treated as though they referred to inanimates, i.e. the noun is of fixed, arbitrary gender:

<i>la araña</i>	spider	<i>el panda</i>	panda
<i>la ardilla</i>	squirrel	<i>el puma</i>	puma
<i>la ballena</i>	whale	<i>la rana</i>	frog
<i>el canguro</i> ⁶	kangaroo	<i>el sapo</i>	toad
<i>el castor</i>	beaver	<i>el tejón</i>	badger
<i>la marsopa</i>	porpoise	<i>el tiburón</i>	shark
<i>la nutria</i>	otter	etc.	

If sex must be distinguished, the male is denoted by adding *macho* ‘male’ and the female by adding *hembra* ‘female’: *la ardilla macho* ‘male squirrel’, *el cangrejo hembra* ‘female crab’, etc.

Agreement of adjectives in good Spanish is with the noun, not with the animal: *La rana macho está muerta* ‘the male frog is dead’, *El ratón hembra es blanco* ‘the female mouse is white’.

Neither *macho* nor *hembra* agrees in gender or number: *las cebras macho* ‘male zebras’, *los gavilanes hembra* ‘female sparrowhawks’.

Note

There is a tendency in familiar language and popular journalism to give such nouns biological gender: *el/la gorila* ‘he-gorilla’ and ‘she-gorilla’ (properly invariably *el gorila*), *el/la jirafa* ‘giraffe’ (*la jirafa* is properly invariably feminine).

1.4 Gender of nouns referring to inanimates

The gender of nouns referring to inanimates (and to plants) must be learned for each noun. The gender of these nouns is arbitrary and cannot be predicted from the meaning of the word. It also has no sexual implications and occasionally varies from place to place or century to century (e.g. Golden Age *la puente*, modern *el puente* ‘bridge’).

There are few infallible rules, and only those are quoted which in our view do not encourage false generalizations.

⁶ *La canguro* is used in Spain to mean ‘child-minder’.

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The other Romance languages are uncertain guides to the gender of Spanish nouns, as the following list shows:

Spanish	French	Portuguese (o = masc. a = fem.)	Italian
<i>el análisis</i>	<i>l'analyse</i> (fem.)	<i>a anaálise</i>	<i>l'analisi</i> (fem.)
<i>la duda</i>	<i>le doute</i>	<i>a dúvida</i>	<i>il dubbio</i>
<i>la estratagema</i>	<i>le stratagème</i>	<i>o estratagema</i>	<i>lo stratagemma</i> (masc.)
<i>el fin</i>	<i>la fin</i>	<i>o fim</i>	<i>la fine</i>
<i>la flor</i>	<i>la fleur</i>	<i>a flor</i>	<i>il fiore</i>
<i>la sal</i>	<i>le sel</i>	<i>o sal</i>	<i>il sale</i>

There are many disagreements of this kind.

1.4.1 Masculine by meaning

Many nouns acquire the gender of an underlying or implied noun (metonymic gender). The following are typical:

(a) Rivers (*el río*): *el Amazonas* 'the Amazon', *el Jarama*, *el Manzanares*, *el Plata* 'the River Plate', *el Sena* 'the Seine' (French *la Seine*), *el Támesis* 'the Thames', *el Volga*.

Locally some rivers may be feminine, but outsiders rarely know this and the masculine is always correct.

(b) Mountains, oceans, seas and lakes (*el monte*, *el océano*, *el mar*, *el lago*): *el Etna*, *el Everest*, *el Himalaya* (singular), *el Pacífico*, *el Caribe* 'Caribbean', *el Windermere*.

(c) The names of cars, boats and aircraft (*el coche*, *el barco*, *el avión*): *un Fiesta*, *un Mercedes*, *un haiga* (colloquial Peninsular Spanish 'flashy car'), *el Queen Elisabeth*, *el Marie Celeste*, *un DC10*, *un Mig 21*.

Also *el caza* 'fighter aircraft'. Light aircraft are usually feminine because of the underlying noun *la avioneta*: *una Cessna*.

(d) Months and days of the week (*los meses y los días de la semana*): *enero/abril pasado*, *el lunes*, *el viernes*.

(e) Wines (*el vino*): *el Borgoña* 'Burgundy', *el champaña/el champán* 'champagne', *el Chianti*, *un Rioja*.

(f) Pictures (*el cuadro*) by named artists: *un Constable*, *un Leonardo*, *un Rembrandt*, *un Riley*.

(g) Sports teams (*el equipo*): *el Barça* 'Barcelona soccer club' (pronounced [bársa]), *el Betis* 'Seville soccer club', *el España*, *el Bilbao*, etc.

(h) All infinitives and all words referred to for grammatical or typographical purposes: *el fumar* 'smoking', *el escupir* 'spitting'.

<i>Quita el "de" y pon un "del"</i> (printer talking)	Take out the 'of' and put an 'of the'
<i>El "cama" no se lee</i>	You can't read the word 'bed'
<i>No viene la señal, el "siga" que él esperaba</i>	The signal doesn't come, the 'go on'
(E. Poniatowska, Mexico)	that he was expecting

(i) Any adverb, interjection or other genderless word used as a noun: *un algo* 'a "something"', *un no sé qué*, 'a je ne sais quoi' (i.e. 'indefinable quality'), *Ella está siempre con un "ay"* 'She's always sighing'/'always got troubles'.

(j) Numbers (*el número*): *un seis, un 5, la Generación del 98* ‘the Generation of 98’, *el dos por ciento* ‘two per cent’.

(k) Musical notes: *el fa, el la* (underlying noun unclear).

(l) Colours (*el color*): *el azul* ‘blue’, *el rosa* ‘pink’, *el ocre* ‘ochre’, *Con lentitud se amplía el naranja del horizonte* ‘The orange of the horizon spreads gradually wider’ (A. Gala, Spain).

(m) Certain trees (*el árbol*) whose fruit is feminine, e.g.

Tree	Fruit	
<i>el almendro</i>	<i>la almendra</i>	almond
<i>el avellano</i>	<i>la avellana</i>	hazel
<i>el banano</i>	<i>la banana</i>	banana (Lat. Am.)
<i>el castaño</i>	<i>la castaña</i>	chestnut
<i>el cerezo</i>	<i>la cereza</i>	cherry
<i>el ciruelo</i>	<i>la ciruela</i>	plum
<i>el granado</i>	<i>la granada</i>	pomegranate
<i>el guayabo</i>	<i>la guayaba</i>	guava
<i>el guindo</i>	<i>la guinda</i>	morello cherry
<i>el mandarino</i>	<i>la mandarina</i>	tangerine
<i>el manzano</i>	<i>la manzana</i>	apple
<i>el naranjo</i>	<i>la naranja</i>	orange
<i>el nogal</i>	<i>la nuez</i>	walnut (or simply ‘nut’)
<i>el papayo</i>	<i>la papaya</i>	papaya
<i>el peral</i>	<i>la pera</i>	pear

But some fruits are masculine: *el limón* ‘lemon’, *el aguacate* ‘avocado’ (called *la palta* in southern Latin America), *el melón* ‘melon’, *el albaricoque* ‘apricot’, *el plátano* ‘banana’, (Spain), *la higuera* ‘fig tree’, but *el higo* ‘fig’.

1.4.2 Masculine by form

(a) Nouns ending in *-o*: *el eco* ‘echo’, *el tiro* ‘shot’.

Exceptions:

<i>la dinamo</i>	dynamo (also <i>la dínamo</i>)
<i>la foto</i>	photo
<i>la Gestapo</i>	the Gestapo
<i>la libido</i>	libido
<i>la magneto</i>	magneto (masc. in Lat. Am.)
<i>la mano</i>	hand (diminutive <i>la manita</i> (Spain), <i>la manito</i> (Lat. Am.))
<i>la moto</i>	motorbike
<i>la nao</i>	ship (archaic)
<i>la polio</i>	polio
<i>la porno</i>	porn(ography) (i.e. <i>la pornografía</i>)

La radio ‘radio’ is feminine in Spain and in the Southern Cone, but in Mexico and Central America and sporadically in northern parts of South America it is masculine: *el radio*. In some places *el radio* is ‘radio set’ and *la radio* is ‘radio station’. *El radio* also everywhere means ‘radius’, ‘radium’ and ‘radiogram’.

(b) Words ending in *-aje, -or, -án, -ambre* or a stressed vowel:

<i>el equipaje</i>	luggage	<i>el amor</i>	love
<i>el paisaje</i>	landscape	<i>el calor</i>	heat

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<i>el color</i>	colour	<i>Canadá</i>	(masc.) Canada
<i>el valor</i>	value	<i>el champú</i>	shampoo
<i>el mazapán</i>	marzipan	<i>el sofá</i>	sofa/couch
<i>el refrán</i>	proverb	<i>el rubí</i>	ruby
<i>el calambre</i>	spasm/twinge	etc.	
<i>el enjambre</i>	swarm		

But: *la labor* 'labour', *la flor*, 'flower'. *El hambre* 'hunger' is also feminine: see 3.1.2 for explanation of the masculine article.

The forms *la calor* and *la color* for *el calor* 'heat' and *el color* 'colour' are heard in dialect and rural speech in Spain and in parts of Latin America. *La televisor* for *el televisor* 'television set' and one or two other unusual genders are also found in local Latin-American dialects.

1.4.3 Common masculine nouns ending in -a

Many errors are caused by the assumption that nouns ending in *-a* are feminine. Many nouns ending in *-ma*, and several other nouns ending in *-a* are masculine:

<i>el anagrama</i>	anagram
<i>el anatema</i>	anathema
<i>el aroma</i>	aroma
<i>el cisma</i>	schism
<i>el clima</i>	climate
<i>el coma</i>	coma (<i>la coma</i> = 'comma')
<i>el crisma</i>	holy oil (but <i>Te rompo la crisma</i> 'I'll knock your block off')
<i>el crucigrama</i>	crossword puzzle
<i>el diagrama</i>	diagram
<i>el dilema</i>	dilemma
<i>el diploma</i>	diploma
<i>el dogma</i>	dogma
<i>el drama</i>	drama
<i>el eczema/eccema</i>	eczema
<i>el emblema</i>	emblem
<i>el enigma</i>	enigma
<i>el esquema</i>	scheme
<i>el estigma</i>	stigma
<i>el fantasma</i>	ghost
<i>el fonema</i>	phoneme
<i>el holograma</i>	hologram
<i>el lema</i>	slogan/watchword
<i>el magma</i>	magma
<i>el miasma</i>	miasma
<i>el panorama</i>	panorama
<i>el pijama</i>	pyjamas/(US) 'pajamas' (<i>la pijama</i> or <i>la piyama</i> in Lat. Am.)
<i>el plasma</i>	plasma
<i>el poema</i>	poem
<i>el prisma</i>	prism
<i>el problema</i>	problem
<i>el programa</i>	program(me)
<i>el radiograma</i>	radiogram
<i>el reuma</i>	rheumatism (less commonly <i>el reuma</i>)

<i>el síntoma</i>	symptom
<i>el sistema</i>	system
<i>el telegrama</i>	telegram
<i>el tema</i>	theme/topic/subject
<i>el trauma</i>	trauma

and most other scientific or technical words ending in *-ma*. These words are masculine because the Greek words they are derived from are neuter. However, *la estratagema* ‘stratagem’, *el asma* ‘asthma’ (see 3.1.2 for explanation of the masculine article) and *la flema* ‘phlegm’ are feminine in Spanish even though the Greek originals are neuter.

For a list of feminine words in *-ma* see 1.4.6.

Notes

(i) A few of these words are feminine in popular speech, dialects and pre-nineteenth-century texts, especially *problema*, *clima*, *miasma* and *fantasma*, cf. *pobre fantasma soñadora* in Lorca’s *El maleficio de la mariposa*.

(ii) Also masculine are: *el aleluya* ‘halleluya’ (*la aleluya* is ‘doggerel’/‘jingle’), *el alerta* ‘alert’ (*el alerta rojo* ‘red alert’; *la alerta* is spreading), *el caza* ‘fighter plane’, *el cometa* ‘comet’ (*la cometa* = ‘kite’, the toy), *el día* ‘day’, *el extra* ‘extra’, *el guardarropa* ‘wardrobe’ (all such compounds are masculine), *el insecticida* ‘insecticide’ (and all chemicals ending in *-icida*), *el mañana* ‘the morrow’/‘tomorrow’ (*la mañana* = ‘morning’), *el mapa* ‘map’, *el mediodía* ‘noon’, *el nirvana*, *el planeta* ‘planet’, *el telesilla* ‘ski-lift’, *el tranvía* ‘tram’, *el vodka*, *el yogur*.

1.4.4 Feminine by meaning

The following are feminine, usually because of an underlying noun:

(a) Companies (*la compañía*, *la firma*): *la Westinghouse*, *la ICI*, *la Seat*, *la Hertz*, *la Volkswagen*, *la Ford*.

(b) Letters of the alphabet (*la letra*): *una b*, *una c*, *una h*, *la omega*. *El delta* ‘river delta’ is masculine.

(c) Islands (*la isla*): *las Azores*, *las Baleares*, *las Antillas* ‘West Indies’, *las Canarias*, etc.

(d) Roads (*la carretera* ‘road’ or *la autopista* ‘motorway’/US ‘freeway’): *la N11*, *la M4*.

1.4.5 Feminine by form

Nouns ending in *-eza*, *-ción*, *-sión*, *-dad*, *-tad*, *-tud*, *-umbre*, *-ie*, *-nza*, *-cia*, *-sis*, *-itis*:

<i>la pereza</i>	laziness	<i>la superficie</i>	surface
<i>la acción</i>	action	<i>la esperanza</i>	hope
<i>la versión</i>	version	<i>la presencia</i>	presence
<i>la verdad</i>	truth	<i>la crisis</i>	crisis
<i>la libertad</i>	freedom	<i>la tesis</i>	thesis
<i>la virtud</i>	virtue	<i>la diagnosis</i>	diagnosis
<i>la muchedumbre</i>	crowd/multitude	<i>la bronquitis</i>	bronchitis
<i>la servidumbre</i>	servitude		etc.
<i>la serie</i>	series		

But the following are masculine:

<i>el análisis</i>	analysis	<i>el éxtasis</i>	ecstasy
<i>el apocalipsis</i>	apocalypse	<i>el paréntesis</i>	parenthesis/bracket
<i>el énfasis</i>	emphasis/pomposity of style		

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1.4.6 Common feminine nouns ending in *-ma*

The majority of nouns ending in *-ma* are masculine (see 1.4.3), but many are feminine. The following are common examples (asterisked forms require the masculine article for reasons explained at 3.1.2, despite the fact that they are feminine nouns):

<i>la alarma</i>	alarm	<i>la forma</i>	shape
<i>el alma*</i>	soul	<i>la gama</i>	selection/range
<i>la amalgama</i>	amalgam	<i>la goma</i>	rubber
<i>el arma*</i>	weapon	<i>la lágrima</i>	tear (i.e. teardrop)
<i>el asma*</i>	asthma	<i>la lima</i>	(wood, nail)
<i>la broma</i>	joke		file/lime (fruit)
<i>la calma</i>	calm	<i>la llama</i>	flame/llama
<i>la cama</i>	bed	<i>la loma</i>	hillock
<i>la cima</i>	summit	<i>la máxima</i>	maxim
<i>la crema</i>	cream	<i>la merma</i>	decrease
<i>la Cuaresma</i>	Lent	<i>la norma</i>	norm
<i>la chusma</i>	rabble	<i>la palma</i>	palm
<i>la diadema</i>	diadem/tiara	<i>la paloma</i>	dove
<i>la doma</i>	breaking-in/taming (= <i>la domadura</i>)	<i>la pantomima</i>	pantomime
		<i>la prima</i>	female cousin/ bonus/prize
<i>la dracma</i>	drachma	<i>la quema</i>	burning
<i>la enzima</i>	enzyme	<i>la rama</i>	branch
<i>la escama</i>	scale (fish)	<i>la rima</i>	rhyme
<i>la esgrima</i>	fencing (with swords)	<i>la sima</i>	chasm/abyss
<i>la/el esperma</i>	sperm	<i>la suma</i>	sum
<i>la estima</i>	esteem	<i>la toma</i>	taking
<i>la estratagema</i>	stratagem	<i>la yema</i>	egg yolk/fingertip
<i>la firma</i>	firm/signature		
<i>la flema</i>	phlegm		

1.4.7 Gender of countries, provinces, regions

Countries, provinces or regions ending in unstressed *-a* are feminine:

<i>la España/Francia/Argentina de hoy</i>	Spain/France/Argentina today
<i>la conservadora Gran Bretaña</i>	conservative Britain

The rest are masculine: (*el*) *Perú*, (*el*) *Paraguay*, (*el*) *Canadá*; *Aragón*, *Devon*, *Tennessee*.

Some place names include the definite article and may exceptionally be feminine, cf. *las Hurdes* (near Salamanca, Spain). For use of the article with countries and place names, see 3.2.17.

Note

Such constructions as *todo Colombia lo sabe* 'all Colombia knows it' are nevertheless normal and correct, especially with the adjectives *todo*, *medio*, *mismo*, etc., probably because the underlying noun is felt to be *pueblo* 'people'. Cf. *Todo Piura está muerta* 'The whole of Piura is dead' (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue).

1.4.8 Gender of cities, towns and villages

Cities ending in unstressed *-a* are usually feminine, the rest are masculine:

<i>la Barcelona de ayer</i>	the Barcelona of yesterday
<i>la Roma de Horacio</i>	Horace's Rome

<i>el Londres de Dickens</i>	Dickens's London
<i>el Moscú turístico</i>	the tourist's Moscow

But there are exceptions like *Nueva York*, *la antigua Cartago*, and spontaneous language often makes cities feminine because of the influence of the underlying noun *la ciudad* 'city':

<i>Bogotá, antes de ser remodelada . . .</i>	Bogota, before it was refashioned . . .
(Colombian press, in <i>Variedades</i> , 20)	

Villages are usually masculine even when they end in *-a*, because of underlying *el pueblo* 'village'.

For the construction *Todo Barcelona habla de ello* see the note to 1.4.7.

1.4.9 Gender of compound nouns

Compound nouns consisting of a verb plus a noun (frequent) are masculine:

<i>el cazamariposas</i>	butterfly net	<i>el paraguas</i>	umbrella
<i>el cuentarrevoluciones</i>	tachometer/ rev-counter	<i>el sacacorchos</i>	corkscrew
<i>el lanzallamas</i>	flamethrower	<i>el saltamontes</i>	grasshopper etc.

The gender of other compound nouns should be learned separately.

1.4.10 Gender of foreign words

Words that refer to human beings will be feminine or masculine according to the gender of the person referred to: *los yuppies*, *el recordman* 'record-holder' (probably borrowed from French), but *la nanny*.

Foreign words referring to inanimates may be feminine if they closely resemble a familiar feminine Spanish word in form or meaning or, sometimes, because they are feminine in the original language:

<i>la beautiful people</i>	the rich set in Madrid (because of <i>la gente</i> ?)
<i>la chance</i>	chance (Lat. Am. only, sometimes masc.)
<i>la élite</i>	élite (best pronounced as in French)
<i>la Guinness</i>	because of <i>la cerveza</i> 'beer'
<i>la hi-fi</i>	because of <i>la alta fidelidad</i>
<i>la Kneset</i>	the Kneset (Israeli parliament, because of <i>las Cortes</i> ?)
<i>la Motorola</i>	portable phone
<i>la NASA</i>	because of <i>la agencia</i>
<i>la opus</i>	in music (cf. <i>la obra</i>), but <i>El Opus</i> = Opus Dei
<i>la pizza</i>	
<i>la roulotte</i>	caravan
<i>la sauna</i>	(masc. in Argentina)
<i>la suite</i>	suite (all senses)

But if the word is un-Spanish in spelling or ending, or is not clearly associated with a feminine Spanish word, it will be masculine. The great majority of foreign-looking words are therefore masculine, even though some of them are feminine in their original language:

<i>el affaire</i>	affair (love or political; fem. in French)
<i>el after-shave</i>	

14 Gender of nouns

<i>el Big Bang</i>	also <i>la Gran Explosión</i>
<i>el best-seller</i>	
<i>los boxes</i>	pits (in motor racing, more correctly <i>el taller</i> ; <i>el box</i> is also sometimes used for 'casing', e.g. of an electrical component)
<i>el boom</i>	financial boom
<i>el/la cassette</i> (or <i>el/la casete</i>)	(<i>el cassette</i> is the player, <i>la cassette</i> the tape)
<i>el chalet</i>	(British) detached house, i.e. a house built on its own land
<i>el chándal</i>	track-suit
<i>el Christmas</i>	Christmas card
<i>el déficit</i>	economic deficit
<i>el diskette</i>	floppy disk; also <i>el disquete</i>
<i>el dumping</i>	commercial dumping
<i>el echarpe</i>	(light) scarf (fem. in French; pronounced as a Spanish word)
<i>el eslogan/los eslóganes</i>	advertising slogan/catch-phrase
<i>el entrecot</i>	entrecote steak (fem. in French)
<i>el fax</i>	
<i>el footing</i>	jogging (from French)
<i>el gel de baño</i>	bath gel
<i>el hardware</i>	(colloquially <i>el hard</i> ; the Academy prefers <i>el soporte físico</i>)
<i>el jazz</i>	
<i>el karaoke</i>	
<i>el joystick</i>	joystick/(US) yoke (of an aeroplane)
<i>el long play</i>	L-P (record)
<i>el marketing</i>	
<i>el modem</i>	
<i>el performance</i>	performance (of a machine)
<i>el poster</i>	
<i>el pub</i>	(in Spain, a fashionable bar with music)
<i>el quark</i>	cf. <i>el neutrón</i> , <i>el protón</i> and <i>el electrón</i> , but <i>las partículas subatómicas</i>
<i>el ranking</i>	
<i>el reprise</i>	pick-up (i.e. acceleration of a car)
<i>el scroll</i>	e.g. <i>hacer un scroll de pantalla</i> 'to scroll the screen' (in computing)
<i>el slip</i>	men's underpants/(US) 'shorts'
<i>el slogan</i>	(publicity) slogan
<i>el software</i>	(colloquially <i>el soft</i> ; the Academy prefers <i>el soporte lógico</i>)
<i>el (e)spray</i>	aerosol
<i>el standing</i>	e.g. <i>un piso alto standing</i> 'desirable flat/apartment'

The formation of the plural of foreign words is discussed at 2.1.5.

There is wide variation between the various Hispanic countries as to the source and number of recent loanwords, so no universally valid list can be drawn up.

1.4.11 Gender of abbreviations

This is determined by the gender of the main noun:

<i>la ONU</i>	UN
<i>la OTAN</i>	NATO
<i>la CEE</i>	EEC
<i>las FF.AA. (Fuerzas Armadas)</i>	Armed Forces
<i>la UVI (Unidad de Vigilancia Intensiva)</i>	Intensive Care Unit
<i>el FBI</i>	

<i>el BOE</i>	Boletín Oficial del Estado (where Spanish laws are published)
<i>la CIA</i>	
<i>la EGB</i>	Educación General Básica, the basic course in Spanish schools
<i>el OVNI (objeto volante no identificado)</i>	UFO

If the gender of the underlying noun is unknown the abbreviation is masculine unless there is a good reason otherwise: *el IRA* ‘the IRA (Irish Republican Army); *la ira* = ‘anger’), but *la RAF*, *la USAF* (because of *las fuerzas aéreas* ‘air force’), etc.

1.4.12 Gender acquired from underlying noun (metonymic gender)

Many of the examples in previous sections illustrate cases of a noun acquiring the gender of another that has been deleted. This accounts for many apparent gender anomalies, cf. *el Psicosis* = *el Bar Psicosis*, (*la (p)sisosis* = ‘psychosis’), *el Avenida* = *el Cine Avenida*, (*la avenida* = ‘avenue’), *una EBRO* = *una camioneta EBRO* ‘an EBRO light truck’, *la Modelo* = *la Cárcel Modelo* ‘Model Jail’, *Radio Nacional de España*, *la número uno* (RNE, 11-1-92, *la emisora* ‘broadcasting station’ omitted) ‘National Radio of Spain, the number one (station)’, *la (número) setenta y tres* = *la habitación número setenta y tres* ‘room seventy-three’.

1.4.13 Doubtful genders

There are a few words of doubtful gender. The following list gives the more common gender in the modern language in Spain (and usually elsewhere). Where both genders are in use, the more usual comes first:

<i>el azúcar</i>	sugar; it is usually masculine, though curiously a following adjective may correctly be feminine, e.g. <i>el azúcar moreno</i> ‘brown sugar’
<i>el calor</i>	heat (<i>la calor</i> is rustic)
<i>el color</i>	colour (<i>la color</i> is rustic)
<i>la dote</i>	dowry/gifts (in plural – <i>tiene dotes</i> ‘he’s gifted’)
<i>la/el duermevela</i>	snooze/nap/light sleep
<i>los herpes</i>	herpes
<i>el hojaldre</i>	puff pastry
<i>el/la interrogante</i>	question
<i>el lente</i>	lens (but <i>las lentillas</i> ‘contact lenses’)
<i>el/la linde</i>	boundary
<i>la/el pelambre</i>	thick hair/mop of hair
<i>la/el pringue</i>	fat/grease/sticky dirt (<i>esto está pringoso</i> ‘this is sticky’)
<i>la sartén</i>	frying pan (masc. in Bilbao and locally in Spain, and in many parts of Lat. Am.; fem. in Mexico)
<i>el/la testuz</i>	forehead (of animals)
<i>la tilde</i>	the sign over an ñ
<i>el/la tizne</i>	soot/black smear or stain
<i>la/el torticólis</i>	stiff neck
<i>el trípode</i>	tripod

Pre-twentieth century texts may contain now obsolete genders, e.g. *la puente* ‘bridge’, *la fin* ‘end’, *la análisis* ‘analysis’, etc.

1.4.14 Gender of *mar*, ‘sea’

Masculine, except in poetry, the speech of sailors and fishermen, in nautical terms (*la pleamar/la bajamar* ‘high/low tide’, *la mar llana* ‘dead calm’) and whenever the word is used as a colloquial intensifier: *la mar de tonto* ‘absolutely stupid’, *la mar de gente* ‘loads’ of people’.

1.4.15 Some Latin-American genders

Some words are given different genders in provincial Spain and/or some parts of Latin America. Examples current in educated usage and writing in some (but not all) Latin-American countries are:

<i>el bombillo</i>	(Sp. <i>la bombilla</i>)	light bulb
<i>el llamado</i>	(<i>la llamada</i>)	call
<i>el vuelto</i>	(<i>la vuelta</i>)	change (money)
<i>el protesto</i>	(<i>la protesta</i>)	protest

There are surely many other examples, locally more or less accepted in educated speech.

1.4.16 Words with two genders

A number of common words have meanings differentiated solely by their gender. Well-known examples are:

	Masculine	Feminine
<i>cometa</i>	comet	kite (toy)
<i>coma</i>	coma	comma
<i>consonante</i>	rhyiming word	consonant
<i>cólera</i>	cholera	wrath/anger
<i>corte</i>	cut	the Court/'Madrid'
<i>capital</i>	capital (money)	capital (city)
<i>cura</i>	priest	cure
<i>delta</i>	river delta	delta (Greek letter)
<i>doblez</i>	fold/crease	duplicity
<i>editorial</i>	editorial	publishing house
<i>escucha</i>	radio monitor/listening device/phone 'bug'	listening/monitoring
<i>frente</i>	front (military)	forehead
<i>guardia</i>	policeman	guard
<i>génesis</i>	Genesis (Bible)	genesis (= birth)
<i>mañana</i>	tomorrow/morrow	morning
<i>margen</i>	margin	riverbank
<i>moral</i>	mulberry tree	morals/morale
<i>orden</i>	order (opposite of disorder)	order (=command or religious order)
<i>ordenanza</i>	messenger/orderly	decree/ordinance
<i>parte</i>	official bulletin	part
<i>pendiente</i>	earring	slope
<i>pez</i>	fish	pitch (i.e. 'tar')
<i>policía</i>	policeman	police force
<i>radio</i>	radius/radium/spoke	radio
<i>terminal</i>	terminal (computers, electrical)	terminus
<i>vocal</i>	member of a board	vowel

Notes

(i) *Arte* 'art' is usually masculine in the singular, but feminine in the plural: *el arte español* 'Spanish art', *las bellas artes* 'fine arts'. But note set phrase *el arte poética* 'Ars Poética'/'treatise on poetry'.

But Manuel Seco (1992) 51, notes that a phrase like *esta nueva arte* 'this new art-form' is not incorrect, and that *los artes de pesca* 'fishing gear' (of a trawler) is standard usage.

(ii) *Radio* in the meaning of 'radio' is masculine from Colombia northwards, feminine elsewhere.

2

Plural of nouns

2.1 Formation of the plural of nouns

2.1.1 Summary of rules

The vast majority of Spanish nouns form their plural in one of the following three ways:

Method	Main type of noun	Example of plural
Add -s	Ending in an unstressed vowel Many foreign words ending in a consonant	<i>las casas</i> <i>los chalets</i> <i>los shows</i>
Add -es	Spanish (not foreign) nouns ending in a consonant other than -s Nouns ending in a stressed vowel + -s Many nouns ending in a stressed vowel	<i>las flores</i> <i>los ingleses</i> <i>los iraníes</i>
No change	Nouns already ending with an unstressed vowel + -s Families (people or things)	<i>las crisis</i> <i>los virus</i> <i>los Blanco</i> <i>los Ford</i>

Exceptions to these rules are discussed in the following sections.

2.1.2 Plural in -s

(a) Nouns ending in an unstressed vowel:

<i>la cama</i>	<i>las camas</i>	table
<i>la serie</i>	<i>las series</i>	series
<i>el quinqui</i>	<i>los quinquis</i>	'tinkers', itinerant peddlers (US 'pedlars') ¹
<i>el huevo</i>	<i>los huevos</i>	egg
<i>la tribu</i>	<i>las tribus</i>	tribe
<i>el ecu</i>	<i>los ecus</i>	Ecu (European Currency Unit)

¹ *Los quinquis* (Spain only) live much like the gypsies but keep apart from them. For many people the word is a synonym for 'gangster'.

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(b) Nouns ending in stressed *-e*, including words of one syllable ending in *-e*:

<i>el café</i>	<i>los cafés</i>	coffee/café
<i>el pie</i>	<i>los pies</i>	foot/feet
<i>el té</i>	<i>los tés</i>	tea (the accent distinguishes this from the pronoun <i>te</i>)

(c) Nouns of more than one syllable ending in *-ó* (rare):

<i>el dominó</i>	<i>los dominós</i>	domino(es)
<i>el buró</i>	<i>los burós</i>	(roll-top) desk

(d) Many foreign words ending in a consonant, e.g. *el club/los clubs* (or *los clubes*). See 2.1.5.

2.1.3 Plural in *-es*

(a) Native (or nativized) nouns ending in a consonant other than *-s*:

<i>el avión</i>	<i>los aviones</i>	aeroplane
<i>el color</i>	<i>los colores</i>	colour
<i>el cuásar</i>	<i>los cuásares</i>	quasar
<i>el/la chófer</i>	<i>los/las chóferes</i>	driver (<i>el chofer/los choferes</i> in many American republics)
<i>la verdad</i>	<i>las verdades</i>	truth
<i>el rey</i>	<i>los reyes</i>	king
<i>el suéter</i>	<i>los suéteres</i>	sweater ²
<i>la vez</i>	<i>las veces</i>	time (as in 'three times')

(b) Nouns ending in a stressed vowel plus *-s*, and all words of one syllable not ending in *-e*:

<i>el anís</i>	<i>los anises</i>	anis (an alcoholic drink)
<i>el autobús</i>	<i>los autobuses</i>	bus
<i>el francés</i>	<i>los franceses</i>	Frenchman
<i>el dios</i>	<i>los dioses</i>	god
<i>el mes</i>	<i>los meses</i>	month
<i>el país</i>	<i>los países</i>	country
<i>la tos</i>	<i>las toses</i>	cough
	<i>los síes y los noes</i>	the 'yesses' and 'noes', usually <i>sís y nos</i> in speech

Exception: *el mentís/los mentís* 'denial' (literary styles).

(c) Nouns ending in *-í*, *-ú* or *-á*:

The following plural forms are considered correct in formal or written language. For the use of the written accent in these words, see notes (iii) and (iv):

<i>el bisturí</i>	<i>los bisturíes</i>	scalpel
<i>el maniquí</i>	<i>los maniquíes</i>	tailor's dummy (<i>la maniquí</i> = female model)
<i>el rubí</i>	<i>los rubíes</i>	ruby
<i>No intento siquiera poner el punto sobre las íes</i> (A. Gala, Spain)		I'm not even trying to dot the Is

² This is the Academy's recommended form, but *los suéters* is commonly heard.

<i>el zulú</i>	<i>los zulúes</i>	Zulu
<i>el tabú</i>	<i>los tabúes</i>	taboo
<i>el ombú</i>	<i>los ombúes</i>	ombu tree (Lat. Am.)
<i>el bajá</i>	<i>los bajaes</i> ³	pasha
<i>el jacarandá</i>	<i>los jacarandaes</i>	jacaranda tree

Exceptions:

<i>papá/papás</i>	father/dad	<i>el menú/los menús</i>	menu
<i>mamá/mamás</i>	mother/mum/mom	<i>el tisú/los tisús</i>	(paper) tissues
<i>sofá/sofás</i> (illiterate * <i>sofases</i>)	sofa/couch		

However, words of this kind usually simply add *-s* in spontaneous speech: *los iraníes* 'Iranians' (properly *los iraníes*), *los jabalís* (properly *jabalíes*) 'wild boars', *los jacarandás*, *los rubís*, *los tabús*, *los zahorís* 'clairvoyants'/'water diviners'. A literary plural form of a truly popular word, e.g. *la gachí/las gachís* 'woman' (Spanish slang) would sound ridiculous.

The Latin-American words *el ají* 'chili'/'chili sauce', and *el maní* 'peanut' (Spain *el cacahuete*) often form the plurals *los ajises*, *los manises* in speech.

Notes

(i) If *-es* is added to a final *z*, the *z* becomes *c*: *la paz/las paces* 'peace', *la voz/las voces* 'voice'.

For words ending in *-g* (rare) or *-c* see 2.1.5.

(ii) If, when *-es* is added, the stress naturally falls on the last syllable but one, any accent written in the singular disappears:

<i>el alacrán</i>	<i>los alacranes</i>	scorpion
<i>el irlandés</i>	<i>los irlandeses</i>	Irishman
<i>la nación</i>	<i>las naciones</i>	nation
<i>el/la rehén</i>	<i>los/las rehenes</i>	hostage
etc.		

This does not apply to words that end in *-í* or *-ú*: *el pakistaní/los pakistaníes* (or *el paquistaní/los paquistaníes*) 'Pakistani', *el tabú/los tabúes* 'taboo'. These are discussed above at 2.1.3c and in note (iv) below.

(iii) Words ending in *-en* (but not *-én!*) require an accent in the plural to preserve the position of the stress. Since they are frequently misspelled, the following commonly-seen forms should be noted:

<i>el carmen</i>	<i>los cármenes</i>	villa with a garden (esp. in Andalusia)
<i>el crimen</i>	<i>los crímenes</i>	crime
<i>el germen</i>	<i>los gémenes</i>	germ
<i>la imagen</i>	<i>las imágenes</i>	image
<i>el lumen</i>	<i>los lúmenes</i>	lumen (in physics)
<i>el/la margen</i>	<i>los/las márgenes</i>	margin (masc.)/river-bank (fem.)
<i>el origen</i>	<i>los orígenes</i>	origin
<i>la virgen</i>	<i>las vírgenes</i>	virgin

This also affects the nativized word *el mitin/los mítines* 'political meeting'.⁴

For the irregular plurals of *el régimen* and *el espécimen* see 2.1.8a.

(iv) When an accent written on *í* or *ú* shows that these vowels are pronounced

³ The combination *ae* never forms a diphthong so it does not require an accent.

⁴ A non-political meeting, e.g. of a department, family, shareholders, etc., is *la reunión*.

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separately and do not form a diphthong, the accent is retained in the plural after the addition of *-es*:

<i>el baúl</i>	<i>los baúles</i>	trunk/chest
<i>el laúd</i>	<i>los laúdes</i>	lute
<i>el país</i>	<i>los países</i>	country
<i>la raíz</i>	<i>las raíces</i>	root

2.1.4 No change in the plural

(a) Words ending in an unstressed vowel plus *s*:

<i>el/los análisis</i>	analysis
<i>el/los atlas</i>	atlas
<i>el/los campus</i>	campus
<i>la/las crisis</i>	crisis
<i>el/los lunes</i>	Monday (similarly all weekdays)
<i>el/los mecenas</i>	patron of the arts
<i>el/los paréntesis</i>	bracket
<i>la/las tesis</i>	thesis
<i>el/los virus</i>	virus

In words of one syllable like *la tos* 'cough', the vowel is always stressed, so the plural ends in *-es*: *las toses*.

(b) Words ending in *-x*, e.g. *el/los dúplex* (US) 'duplex apartment'/(British) 'maisonette', *el/los fénix* 'phoenix', *el/los fax* 'fax': *No bajamos de tres o cuatro fax por día* (interview in *Cambio16*, Spain) 'We don't send less than three or four faxes a day'.

(c) Latin words ending in *-t* (at least in careful language):

los altos déficit presupuestarios (*El País*) high budgetary deficits

Likewise *los superávit* 'budgetary surpluses', *los accésit* 'second prizes', *el/los quórum*. But in everyday usage words in *-um* usually form their plural in *-ums*: *el memorándum/los memorándums*, *el referéndum/los referéndums*, *el ultimátum/los ultimátums*, *el currículum vitae/los currículums vitae*.

El País prefers the plurals *memorandos*, *referendos*, *ultimatos* and *currículos*, though common usage says *-ums*. The corresponding singular forms, *el memorando*, *el referendo*, *el ultimato* are Academy recommendations that the public has not accepted. *El currículum* 'curriculum' has recently spread in Peninsular colloquial language (and possibly also elsewhere).

In spontaneous speech all Latin words may be treated like other foreign words (see 2.1.5). Spanish speakers do not try to impress by using Latin plurals, cf. our (incorrect) 'referenda' for 'referendums'.

(d) Words ending in a consonant plus *-s*: *los bíceps*, *los fórceps*.

2.1.5 Plural of foreign words ending in a consonant

The universal tendency is to treat them all as English words and add *-s*, whatever language they come from. This produces words that end in two consonants, which goes against the spirit of the Spanish language and irritates grammarians. As a result, some foreign words have recommended written plurals in *-es* and everyday spoken plurals in *-s*, e.g. *los cócteles/los*

cóctels 'cocktail', *los córneres/los córners* 'corner' (in soccer), *los fraques/los fracs* 'dress-coat'/'tails'.⁵

As a rule, if a word ends in *b, c, f, g, k, m, p, t, v*, or in any two or more consonants, it is almost certainly a foreign word and will make its plural in *-s* unless it ends with a *s, sh* or *ch* sound, cf. *el kibutz* 'kibbutz', *el flash*, *el lunch*, *el sketch*, in which case it will probably be invariable in spontaneous speech. Well-informed speakers may use foreign plurals like *los flashes*, *los kibutzim*, *los sketches*. Examples:

<i>el álbum</i>	<i>los álbums</i>	(written form <i>los álbumes</i>)
<i>el barman</i>	<i>los barmans</i>	barman (the most usual colloquial plural in Spain, although <i>los barmen</i> is heard)
<i>el boicot</i>	<i>los boicots</i>	boycott
<i>el complot</i>	<i>los complots</i>	(political) plot
<i>el coñac</i>	<i>los coñacs</i>	cognac
<i>el chalet</i>	<i>los chalets</i>	detached house
<i>el esnob</i>	<i>los esnobs</i>	'snob'/'trendy' ⁶
<i>el hit</i>	<i>los hits</i>	hit parade
<i>el hobby</i>	<i>los hobbies</i>	hobby/hobbies
<i>el iceberg</i>	<i>los icebergs</i>	iceberg
<i>el kart</i>	<i>los karts</i>	go-kart
<i>el penalty⁷</i>	<i>los penaltys</i>	(in soccer)
<i>el quark</i>	<i>los quarks</i>	quark (in physics)
<i>el tic</i>	<i>los tics</i>	tic
etc.		

Notes

(i) *El sandwich* (different from a *bocadillo*, which is a filled bread roll), makes the plural *los sandwiches* in educated usage, but *los sandwich* is frequently heard. It is pronounced [sángwich]. The Academy's word for 'sandwich', *el emparedado*, has never found favour.

(ii) Some modern loanwords are treated as Spanish words. This happens most readily when the word ends in *-l, -n* or *-r*:

<i>el bar</i>	<i>los bares</i>	bar
<i>el dólar</i>	<i>los dólares</i>	dollar
<i>el electrón</i>	<i>los electrones</i>	electron
<i>el escáner</i>	<i>los escáneres</i>	scanner (also <i>el scanner/los scanners</i>)
	<i>los espaguetis</i>	spaghetti (also <i>los espagueti</i>)
<i>el gol</i>	<i>los goles</i>	goal (in sport)
<i>el hotel</i>	<i>los hoteles</i>	hotel
<i>el neutrón</i>	<i>los neutrones</i>	neutron
<i>el quasar</i>	<i>los quasares</i>	quasar (preferably <i>el cuásar/los cuásares</i>)
etc.		

(iii) Academy plurals like *el gong/los gongues* 'gong', *el zizgzag/los zigzagues* 'zigzag', etc. are not used; *-s* alone is added. However *el film(e)/los filmes* is not uncommon and is recommended by *El País* (the everyday word is *la película*), and *el club/los clubes*

⁵ Grammarians often recommend Hispanized forms of foreign words, e.g. *güisqui* for *whisky*, *yip* for *jeep*, *yaz* for *jazz*, *yóquey* or *yoqui* for *jockey*, etc. Since use of such forms suggests ignorance of foreign languages, it is unlikely that many of them will be adopted.

⁶ In Spain *esnob* can also be applied to objects, in which case it means 'trendy' or 'flashy': *un coche esnob* = 'a flashy car'.

⁷ Pronounced [elpenálti].

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'club' is normal in Latin America for the common Peninsular *los clubs* (*El País* prefers *los clubes*).

(iv) Some writers and editors occasionally treat foreign words ending in a consonant like Latin words (see 2.1.4c), so forms like *los hit*, *los láser* are sometimes seen; *El País* recommends *los láser*. Zero plural forms are often given to foreign words in spontaneous everyday speech.

2.1.6 Proper names

If a proper name refers to a collective entity such as a family, it has no plural form: *los Franco*, *los Mallol*, *los Pérez*; *en casa de los Riba* (E. Poniatowska, Mexico) 'in the Ribas' house'.

A group of individuals who merely happen to have the same name will be pluralized according to the usual rules, although names in -z are almost always invariable:

<i>Este pueblo está lleno de Morenos, Blancos y Pérezes/Pérez</i>	This village is full of Morenos, Blancos and Perezes
<i>no todos los Juan Pérez del mundo</i>	not all the Juan Perezes in the world
(J. Donoso, Chile)	
<i>los Góngoras del siglo dieciocho</i>	the Gongoras of the eighteenth century

Notes

(i) The same principle also applies to objects that form families: *los Ford* 'Ford cars', *los Chevrolet*, *los Simca*.

(ii) Royal houses are considered to be successive individuals: *los Borbones* 'the Bourbons', *los Habsburgos*.

2.1.7 Compound nouns

(a) Those (the most common) consisting of a verb plus a plural noun do not change in the plural:

<i>el/los abrelatas</i>	tin-opener
<i>el elevavunas</i>	automatic window opener (in a car)
<i>el/los lanzamisiles</i>	missile-launcher
<i>el/los limpiabotas</i>	shoe-shine
<i>el/los portaaviones</i>	aircraft carrier

(b) There is a growing class of compounds consisting of two juxtaposed nouns. Normally only the first noun is pluralized. The following forms have been noted from various written sources:

<i>el año luz</i>	<i>los años luz</i>	light year
<i>el arco iris</i>	<i>los arcos iris</i>	rainbow
<i>la cárcel modelo</i>	<i>las cárceles modelo</i>	model prison
<i>el coche cama</i>	<i>los coches cama</i>	sleeping car
<i>el hombre rana</i>	<i>los hombres rana</i> ⁸	frogman
<i>la hora punta</i>	<i>las horas punta</i>	rush hour (lit. 'point hour')
<i>el experimento piloto</i>	<i>los experimentos piloto</i>	pilot experiment
<i>el niño prodigio</i>	<i>los niños prodigio</i>	child prodigy
<i>el perro policía</i>	<i>los perros policía</i>	police dog
<i>el sistema antimisil</i>	<i>los sistemas antimisil</i>	antimissile system

⁸ Manuel Seco (1992), 223, says the plural should be *los hombres-ranas*, but neither the hyphen nor the double plural reflects general usage.

But always:

<i>el país miembro</i>	<i>los países miembros</i>	member country
<i>la tierra virgen</i>	<i>las tierras vírgenes</i>	virgin land

Pluralization of the second noun robs it of its adjectival force: *los hombres ranas* sounds like 'men who are frogs', cf.

<i>las ediciones pirata</i>	pirate editions	<i>los editores piratas</i>	pirate publishers
<i>los niños modelo</i>	model children	<i>los niños modelos</i>	child models

(c) Other compound nouns are treated as single words with regular plurals:

<i>altavoz</i>	<i>los altavoces</i>	loudspeaker (Lat. Am. <i>el altoparlante</i>)
<i>bocacalle</i>	<i>las bocacalles</i>	side street
<i>correveidile</i>	<i>los correveidiles</i>	tell-tale
<i>sordomudo</i>	<i>los sordomudos</i>	deaf-mute
<i>hidalgo</i>	<i>los hidalgos</i>	nobleman (the old plural was <i>hijosdalgo</i>)

2.1.8 Irregular plurals

There are only two or three irregular plural nouns.

(a) Three common nouns shift their stress in the plural:

<i>el carácter</i>	<i>los caracteres</i>	character (* <i>los caracteres</i> is not Spanish!)
<i>el espécimen</i>	<i>los especímenes</i>	specimen
<i>el régimen</i>	<i>los regímenes</i>	régime

(b) *El lord* (British) 'lord' has the plural *los lores*: *la Cámara de los Lores* 'The House of Lords'.

The scholarly word *el hipérbaton* 'hyperbaton' usually forms the plural *los hipérbatos*.

2.2 Syntax and semantics of plural nouns

2.2.1 Mass nouns and count nouns in Spanish and English

A count noun refers to countable items, 'egg'/'two eggs'. Mass or uncountable nouns denote non-countable items, 'justice', 'bread', but not *'two justices', *'two breads'.

In both English and Spanish, mass or uncountable nouns can often be pluralized to mean different varieties of the thing in question: 'her fear'/'her fears', 'my love'/'my loves', 'I love French wine'/'I love French wines'.

This device is far more frequent in Spanish than in English, and idiomatic translation of the resulting plural noun may require thought, e.g.:

<i>Si aparece por tu casa, lo echas sin contemplaciones</i> (J. Marsé, Spain, dialogue)	If he turns up at your house, throw him out on the spot/without second thoughts
<i>Para nosotros existen dos urgencias</i> (interview in <i>Cambio16</i> , Spain)	For us there are two urgent issues (lit. 'urgencias')

A number of Spanish nouns can be pluralized in this way whereas their English translation cannot.⁹ Examples:

<i>la amistad</i>	friendship	<i>las amistades</i>	friends
<i>la atención</i>	attention	<i>las atenciones</i>	acts of kindness

⁹ Some of these examples are from Iannucci (1952) and Stockwell *et al.* (1965).

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<i>la bondad</i>	goodness	<i>las bondades</i>	good acts
<i>la carne</i>	meat	<i>las carnes</i>	fleshy parts
<i>la crueldad</i>	cruelty	<i>las crueldades</i>	cruel acts
<i>la gente</i>	people	<i>las gentes</i>	peoples
<i>la información</i>	information	<i>las informaciones</i>	news items
<i>el negocio</i>	business	<i>los negocios</i>	business affairs
<i>el pan</i>	bread	<i>los panes</i>	loaves of bread
<i>el progreso</i>	progress	<i>los progresos</i>	advances
<i>la tostada</i>	toast	<i>las tostadas</i>	slices of toast
<i>la tristeza</i>	sadness	<i>las tristezas</i>	sorrows
<i>el trueno</i>	thunder	<i>los truenos</i>	thunderclaps
etc.			

2.2.2 Nouns denoting symmetrical objects

As in English, these nouns are usually invariably plural:

<i>los auriculares</i>	earphones
<i>las gafas</i>	glasses (Lat. Am. <i>los anteojos</i>)
<i>los gemelos</i>	binoculars/cuff-links/twins
<i>las tijeras</i>	scissors

But usage is uncertain in some cases, with a colloquial tendency towards the singular. The more usual form (in Spain) comes first:

<i>los alicates/el alicate</i>	pliers/pincer
<i>las bragas/la braga</i>	knickers/panties
<i>los calzoncillos/un calzoncillo</i>	underpants/(US, shorts)
<i>la nariz/las narices</i>	nose (the plural is colloquial)
<i>las pinzas/la pinza</i>	peg/pincers/tweezers/dart (in sewing)
<i>el pantalón/los pantalones</i>	trousers/(US, pants (both Spanish forms equally common ¹⁰))
<i>las tenazas/la tenaza</i>	tongs/pliers

Note

las escaleras/la escalera 'stairs' (plural more common), but singular if it means 'a ladder'.

2.2.3 Nouns always plural in Spanish

As happens in English, some nouns or phrases are normally found only in the plural. The following list is by no means exhaustive:

<i>las afueras</i>	outskirts
<i>los alrededores</i>	surroundings
<i>los altos</i> (Lat. Am.)	upstairs flat/apartment
<i>los bajos</i> (Lat. Am.)	downstairs flat/apartment
<i>los bienes</i>	goods, provisions
<i>buenos días</i>	good morning
<i>buenas noches</i>	good night (greeting or goodbye)
<i>buenas tardes</i>	good afternoon
<i>las cosquillas</i>	tickling
<i>los enseres</i>	goods and chattels/ household goods
<i>las exequias</i>	funeral rites
<i>las ganas</i>	urge/desire
<i>las nupcias</i> (archaic)	wedding rites

¹⁰ But always *En casa es ella la que lleva los pantalones* 'She's the one who wears the trousers round the house' (i.e. 'she's the boss').

<i>las tinieblas</i>	darkness
<i>los ultramarinos</i>	groceries
<i>las vacaciones</i>	holiday/vacation
etc.	

2.2.4 Singular for objects of which a person has only one

The English sentence 'they cut their knees' is ambiguous: one knee or both? Spanish normally clarifies the issue by using the singular if only one each is implied or if only one thing is possessed:

<i>Les cortaron la cabeza</i>	They cut off their heads
<i>Se quitaron el sombrero</i>	They took off their hats
<i>Todos tenían novia</i>	All had girlfriends (one each)
<i>tres israelíes con pasaporte alemán</i> (Cambio16, Spain)	three Israelis with German passports
<i>La cara de Antonio no refleja el mismo entusiasmo. Ni la de sus cuñados tampoco</i> (Carmen Rico-Godoy, Spain)	Antonio's face doesn't reflect the same enthusiasm. Nor do (lit. 'nor does that of') those of his brothers-in-law

This rule is sometimes ignored in Latin-American speech: *Nos hemos mojado las cabezas* (Bolivia, quoted Kany, 26) 'We've wet our heads', *Lo hacían para que no les viéramos las caras* (L. Spota, dialogue, Mexico) 'They were doing it so we wouldn't see their faces'.

2.2.5 Singular for plural

Singular nouns may sometimes be used to represent large numbers after words like *mucho*, *tanto*, etc., often, but not exclusively, with an ironic tone:

<i>En verano viene mucho inglés . . .</i>	In summer you get a lot of English . . .
<i>con tanto anglófilo como anda por ahí . . .</i>	with all those Anglophiles about . . .
<i>Se emocionó de ver tanto libro junto</i> (L. Sepúlveda, Chile)	He was moved to see so many books together

This construction is colloquial and tends to sound mocking.

2.3 Number agreement rules

This section covers various aspects of number agreement, mainly with nouns. For further remarks on the agreement of adjectives see 4.7. For the agreement of possessive adjectives, see 8.3.2. For agreement with *cuyo* see 35.7. For tense agreement see 16.16.

2.3.1 Number agreement with collective nouns

(a) Adjectives that modify a collective noun (one that refers to a group of persons or things) are singular and the verb is in the singular when it immediately follows the collective noun: *La mayoría musulmana ha reaccionado . . .* 'The Muslim majority have/has reacted . . .', *La policía británica busca a dos individuos* 'The British police are looking for two individuals'. As the translations show, such nouns may be treated as plurals in English – especially in spoken British English, cf.

<i>El gobierno considera . . .</i>	The government consider(s)
<i>La gente dice . . .</i>	People say . . .
<i>La tripulación está a su disposición</i>	The crew is/are at your disposal

(b) If the collective noun is linked to a plural noun (usually by *de*), the safest option is to make the adjective or verb plural: *un grupo de vecinos airados* 'a group of angry neighbours', *una mayoría de españoles creen que...* 'a majority of Spaniards think that...'. The singular is, in fact, quite common in such constructions, but use of the plural will prevent beginners uttering nonsense like **un grupo de mujeres embarazado* 'a pregnant group of women' for *un grupo de mujeres embarazadas* 'a group of pregnant women'.

Examples:

<i>Un mínimo de 13 presos habían sido asistidos de heridas</i> (El País, Spain)	A minimum of 13 prisoners had been treated for injuries
<i>La mayoría duermen, hechos ovillos</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru; <i>duerme</i> would sound wrong here because of the adjacent plural participle <i>hechos</i>)	The majority are curled up asleep

As mentioned above, singular agreement is very common when the meaning allows it:

<i>Un sinnúmero de personas observaba el famoso Big Ben</i> (El Comercio, Peru)	A vast crowd of people was/were watching the famous Big Ben
<i>La masa de los creyentes no era menos compleja que sus creencias</i> (O. Paz, Mexico)	The mass of believers were no less complex than their beliefs
<i>El resto de mis bienes es ya vuestro</i> (A. Gala, Spain)	The rest of my goods are yours now

Notes

(i) The question of agreement with collective nouns in constructions like *una mayoría de personas* is controversial. Seco (1992), 110, advocates the plural, but the style book of *El País* recommends the singular wherever possible.

Native speakers will sometimes hesitate over agreement with collective nouns: *una pareja amiga que se llama/llaman Mario y Ana* 'a couple who are friends of ours and are called Mario and Ana'.

(ii) When the collective noun is separated from the verb by intervening words, plural agreement is normal: *Una muchedumbre entró en el Palacio Real, pero al encontrarse con las tropas, huyeron* 'A crowd entered the Royal Palace, but on encountering the troops, they fled'.

(iii) For constructions like *Esa gente son unos desgraciados*, *El comité son unos mentirosos*, see 2.3.3.

2.3.2 Plural noun after *tipo de*, etc.

After *tipo de* and similar phrases, count nouns are often made plural:

<i>Ya que ese tipo de rostros es frecuente en los países sudamericanos</i> (E. Sábato, Argentina)	Since that type of face is frequent in South American countries
---	---

¿Por qué hacen los hombres este tipo de cosas? Why do men do this kind of thing?
(C. Rico-Godoy, Spain)

2.3.3 *Esto son lentejas, todo son problemas, etc.*

When *ser* (and occasionally a few other verbs like *volverse*) has a singular subject and a plural noun for its predicate, the verb agrees in number with the predicate, a construction which is unfamiliar to English speakers and difficult to analyse according to the traditional rules of grammar.

This most commonly occurs after neuter pronouns like *todo* 'everything. . .', *esto* 'this. . .', etc.

A similar phenomenon is found in French and German, which say 'it are lies': *ce sont des mensonges, es sind Lügen*:

<i>Esa gente son unos ladrones</i>	Those people are thieves
<i>Esto son lentejas y eso son guisantes</i>	This is lentils and that's peas
<i>Todo son problemas</i>	It's all problems
<i>El escrito eran sus 'condiciones' para que las Fuerzas Armadas aceptaran el sistema establecido (Cambio16, Spain)</i>	The document was his 'conditions' for the Armed Forces accepting the established system
<i>Su morada más común son las ruinas . . . (J.L. Borges, Argentina)</i>	Their most usual dwelling-place is (in) ruins
<i>Al perro flaco todo se le vuelven pulgas</i>	Everything turns to fleas for a skinny dog (i.e. one misfortune follows another)

However, the following example suggests that this rule is not rigidly applied everywhere:

<i>En la terrible escasez que vive el país, lo único que no falta es cigarrillos (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, for son cigarrillos)</i>	Amidst the terrible shortages the country is living through, the only thing that isn't lacking is cigarettes
---	--

Note

For this rule to be applied, the predicate must literally refer to a series of different things. In the following example the statement does not refer to something that is literally plural:

<i>María es en realidad muchas personas diferentes</i>	Maria is really a lot of different people (i.e. she has lots of different personalities)
--	--

María son muchas personas diferentes would mean that there are a lot of people who are assumed to be Maria.

2.3.4 Agreement with nouns linked by *y*, *o* and phrases meaning 'as well as'

(a) Nouns linked by *y* require plural agreement unless they are felt to form a single concept. Compare

<i>Su padre y su madre estaban preocupados</i> and <i>un atolondrado ir y venir</i>	His father and his mother were worried a mad coming and going
---	--

Further examples:

<i>Su modestia y dulzura me encantaba (or encantaban)</i> . . . <i>el derrumbe del socialismo y la desaparición de la URSS causó el mayor daño en el orden económico</i> (speech by Fidel Castro in <i>Cuba Internacional</i> ; <i>causaron</i> equally possible)	Her modesty and gentleness charmed me . . . the collapse of socialism and the disappearance of the Soviet Union caused the greatest damage in the economic sphere
--	--

Note

As in any language, a speaker may start an utterance with a single noun and then

add further nouns as an afterthought. In this case the rules of agreement will not be applied:

Por supuesto que podemos pensar que en el juicio de Lope pesaba la rivalidad, el resentimiento, y la cercanía (E. Sábato, *Argentina, interview*; *pesaban* equally possible)

Obviously we can suppose that rivalry, resentment and closeness to the events played their part in Lope's assessment¹¹

(b) With *o* agreement is optional, but the singular stresses the idea of 'one or the other' more than the plural:

Viene(n) Mario o Antonia

Mario or Antonia *is/are* coming

Singular agreement is usual when the nouns represent a single idea:

la depresión o tristeza que afecta(n) . . .

the depression or sadness that affect(s) . . .

(c) Agreement after phrases that mean 'as well as', 'likewise', etc. seems to be optional, although the plural is more common:

Tanto Mario como María pensaba(n) que . . .

both Mario and Maria thought that . . .

¹¹ The 17th-century playwright Lope de Vega allegedly said that *Don Quixote* was the worst book he had ever read.

3

Articles

Use of the definite article *el/la/los/las* is discussed in sections 3.2. The indefinite article *un/una/unos/unas* is discussed in section 3.3. *Unos/unas* is discussed at 3.4.

For the use of the definite article to replace a possessive adjective, e.g. *Se ha roto el brazo* 'He's broken his arm', *Me dejé la cartera en casa* 'I left my wallet at home', see 8.3.4. For the definite article in superlatives see 5.3. For the 'neuter article' *lo* see 7.2.

3.1 Forms of the definite article

3.1.1 Masculine and feminine definite articles

	Masculine	Feminine
Singular	<i>el</i>	<i>la</i>
Plural	<i>los</i>	<i>las</i>

La is always written in full in modern Spanish. Compare Spanish *la artista* 'woman artist' with Italian *l'artista*. The *-a* is not elided in pronunciation before words beginning with a vowel other than *a*: *la emisora* 'radio station' is pronounced [laemisóra], not [lemisóra].

3.1.2 Use of *el* and *un* before certain feminine nouns

El and *un* are always used immediately before singular feminine nouns beginning with stressed *a-* or *ha-*, despite the fact that all the adjectives and pronouns that modify these nouns must be in the feminine form. This feature of Spanish has no counterpart in other Romance languages.

This important rule must not be broken, although it is not always observed in pre-nineteenth-century texts and in some dialects. The following are some common examples:

<i>el/un abra</i>	mountain pass (Lat. Am., <i>el puerto</i>)
<i>el África contemporánea</i>	contemporary Africa
<i>el agua</i>	water
<i>el/un águila</i>	eagle
<i>el/un alba</i>	dawn (poetic)
<i>el/un alma humana</i>	the human soul

<i>el/un alza</i>	rise/increase
<i>el/un ancla</i>	anchor
<i>el/un área</i>	area
<i>el/un arma</i>	weapon
<i>el/un arpa</i>	harp
<i>el Asia de hoy</i>	Asia today
<i>el asma</i>	asthma
<i>el/un aula</i>	lecture room
<i>el/un haba</i>	bean
<i>el/un habla</i>	language/speech form
<i>el/un hacha</i>	axe/(US) ax
<i>el/un hada</i>	fairy
<i>el/un hambre</i>	hunger
<i>el hampa madrileña</i>	the Madrid criminal underworld
<i>el/un haya</i>	beech

Compare the following words which do not begin with a stressed *a*:

<i>la/una amnistía</i>	amnesty
<i>la/una apertura</i>	opening
<i>la/una armonía</i>	harmony
<i>la/una hamaca</i>	hammock

Exceptions:

<i>la a, la hache</i>	'a', 'h' (letters of the alphabet)
<i>la Ángela, la Ana</i>	and other women's names (see 3.2.2 for the rare use of the article with personal names)
<i>La Haya</i>	the Hague
<i>la/uná haz</i>	surface/face (archaic; also <i>el haz</i> although fem.; <i>el haz</i> , masc. = bundle/sheaf)
<i>la árabe</i>	Arab woman
<i>la ácrata</i>	anarchist woman

Notes

(i) The plural is always with *las/unas*: *las águilas* 'eagles', *las hachas* 'axes'. The feminine article must be used if any word intervenes between the article and the noun: *una peligrosa arma* 'a dangerous weapon', *la misma área* 'the same area'.

(ii) The rule applies only to nouns, not to adjectives: *la/una ardua lucha* 'the/an arduous struggle', . . . *una amplia estancia con libros y cuadros* (F. Umbral, Spain) 'a wide room with books and paintings', *la/una ancha puerta* 'wide door', *Suele asumir la forma de una alta mujer silenciosa* (J.L. Borges, Argentina) 'She usually takes the form of a tall silent woman'.

(iii) This rule should apply to those rare feminine compound nouns whose first element would have begun with a stressed *a* had it stood alone: *el aguamarina* 'aquamarine', *un avemaría* 'an Ave María'.

(iv) It is a bad error to treat such words as masculine in the singular. One must say *un aula oscura* 'a dark lecture hall', not **un aula oscuro*, *la última alza* 'the latest rise', not **el último alza*, etc.

However, mistakes like ?*Habrà que encontrar otro aula* 'We'll have to find another lecture-room' (for *otra aula*) or *el habla popular hispanomericano* 'popular Spanish-American speech' (seen in a Spanish grammar book!) are extremely common, and constructions like ?*Tengo un hambre bárbaro* 'I'm starving hungry' or ?*Tengo mucho hambre* 'I'm very hungry' pass unnoticed in relaxed Latin-American speech, although they are not allowed in formal language.

(v) The forms *algún* 'some', *ningún* 'no' are normal in spontaneous speech before such nouns, but *alguna*, *ninguna* are the recommended written forms.

Este 'this', *ese* and *aquel* 'that' are also common in spontaneous speech before such

nouns, but the feminine forms should be used in writing: *esta área* 'this area', *esta agua* 'that water'.

(vi) The usual explanation of the use of *el* before feminine nouns beginning with stressed *a-* is that the ancient form of the feminine article, *ela*, was abbreviated to *el* before such nouns: *ela arma* > *el arma*. But this does not explain why the masculine form is not used before adjectives beginning with stressed *a-*, e.g. *la ancha puerta*, never **el ancha puerta*.

3.1.3 *Del* and *al*

De plus *el* is shortened to *del* 'of the'. *A* plus *el* is shortened to *al* 'to the'. *De él* 'of him' and *a él* 'to him' are not abbreviated in modern Spanish.

The abbreviated forms are not used (at least in writing) if the article is part of a proper name:

la primera página de El Comercio
Viajaron a El Cairo
el autor de El intruso

page one of *El Comercio*
They journeyed to Cairo
the author of *The Intruder*

3.2 Uses and omission of the definite article

3.2.1 General remarks on the use of the definite article

Article usage is especially difficult to define, and usage of the definite article notoriously so: why *does* one say *en la práctica* 'in practice' but *en teoría* 'in theory'?

Article usage also varies in detail from region to region in the Spanish-speaking world, so the following remarks must be supplemented by careful study of good writing and educated speech.

Perhaps the most striking difference between Spanish and English is the use of the definite article with generic nouns, i.e. nouns which refer to a concept or object in general: *la naturaleza* 'nature', *la democracia* 'democracy', *el espacio* 'space' (in general) or 'the space', *las vacas* 'cows' (in general) or 'the cows'. But this rule is by no means hard and fast.

Careful study of the following pages should make it clear to students of French that although use of the Spanish definite article resembles French usage, the definite article in Spanish is in fact less used than its modern French counterpart, and is apparently less used than fifty years ago.

3.2.2 The French and Spanish definite articles

The following summary of the main differences may be useful.

French	Spanish
Usual with unqualified names of countries, provinces, continents: <i>L'Espagne est un beau pays, L'Amérique,</i> etc.	Not used (with occasional exceptions – see 3.2.17): <i>España es un hermoso país, América,</i> etc.
Often used when addressing people: <i>Salut les gars!, Oui, monsieur le Président</i>	Not used: <i>¡Hola muchachos!, Sí, señor Presidente</i>

Used without preposition with numerous time words: *le soir* 'in the evening', *le matin* 'in the morning', *le lendemain* 'the next day'

Not used in time expressions of the type *il est huit heures*

Used with generic nouns: *Le vin est mauvais pour la foie* 'Wine's bad for the liver', *l'amour est aveugle* 'love is blind'

Used instead of possessives with parts of the body, clothing, mental faculties: *Il ferme les yeux, Il a perdu la mémoire*, etc.

Double article in superlatives when adjective follows noun: *le livre le plus intéressant*

Used with superlative adverbs: *C'est lui qui chante le mieux*

De used before partitive nouns (i.e. to express 'some'): *Il boit de l'eau, Il y avait de la neige*

Preposition often required: *por la tarde, por la mañana, al día siguiente*, but *el año pasado*, 'last year', etc.

Used: *son las ocho*

Very similar, but not identical (see 3.2.6 - 3.2.10): *El vino es malo para el hígado, El amor es ciego*

Same, but more extensive: *Cierra los ojos, Ha perdido la memoria*; also *Te he aparcado el coche* 'I've parked your car', etc. See 8.3.4

Only one article, *el libro más interesante*. See 5.3

Not used: *Él es quien mejor canta*. See 5.4.

No article or preposition in partitive constructions: *Bebe agua, Había nieve* (except occasionally before demonstratives; see 3.2.8 note ii)

3.2.3 A useful generalization about the Spanish definite article

With two important exceptions, if the definite article is used in English it is also used in Spanish:

la caída del gobierno
Es difícil definir el uso del artículo definido

the fall of the government
It is difficult to define the use of the definite article

Exceptions:

(a) Ordinal numbers with kings, popes, etc.: *Fernando séptimo* 'Ferdinand the Seventh', *Carlos quinto* 'Charles the Fifth'.

(b) A number of set phrases in Spanish take no article whereas their English equivalent usually does. They must be learned separately:

<i>a cortolargo plazo</i>	in the short/long run	<i>en nombre de</i>	in the name of
<i>cuesta abajo</i>	down (the) hill	<i>hacia oriente</i>	towards the east
<i>cuesta arriba</i>	up (the) hill	<i>(hacia el este)</i>	
<i>a gusto de</i>	to the liking of	<i>a título de</i>	in the capacity of
<i>en alta mar</i>	on the high seas	<i>a voluntad de</i>	at the discretion of
<i>en camino</i>	on the way	<i>de plantilla</i>	on the payroll/staff
<i>en dicho mes</i>	in the said month	etc.	
<i>en manos de</i>	at/in the hands of		

This applies only to set adverbial phrases: compare *en las manos de Julia* 'in Julia's hands'. Note also *a fuerza de* 'by dint of', and *a la fuerza/por fuerza* 'by force'.

Note

The converse is not true: the Spanish definite article is constantly used where English

uses none, e.g. *El feminismo ha mejorado la condición de las mujeres* 'Feminism has improved the condition of women'.

3.2.4 Definite article with more than one noun

If two or more nouns appear together, each has its own article if they are individually particularized or are felt to indicate different things (see 3.2.7 for further remarks on lists of nouns).

In this respect Spanish differs sharply from English, which allows omission of the second article, possessive or demonstrative in phrases like 'the sun and moon', 'a dog and cat', 'my brother and sister', 'those men and women'. Spanish says *el sol y la luna, un perro y un gato, mi hermano y mi hermana, esos hombres y esas mujeres*. ?*Un gato y perro* sounds like a cross between a cat and a dog:

<i>el padre y la madre</i>	the father and mother
<i>entre el hotel y la playa</i>	between the hotel and (the) beach
<i>el agua y la leche</i>	the water and (the) milk
<i>Por el contrario, ello ayuda a mantener el país en el subdesarrollo, es decir la pobreza, la desigualdad y la dependencia</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)	On the contrary, it helps to keep the country in a state of underdevelopment – i.e. poverty, inequality and dependence

But if the nouns are felt to form a single complex idea or are felt to be aspects of the same thing (often the case when they are joined by *o* 'or'), all but the first article may be omitted, especially in writing:

<i>el misterio o enigma del origen</i> . . . (O. Paz, Mexico)	the mystery or enigma of the origin . . .
<i>El procedimiento y consecuencias son semejantes</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)	The procedure and consequences are similar
<i>Si una universidad debe pagar el precio de la enseñanza gratuita renunciando a contar con los laboratorios, equipos, bibliotecas, aulas, sistemas audiovisuales indispensables para cumplir con su trabajo [...] aquella solución es una falsa solución</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)	If a university has to pay the price of free education by giving up the laboratories, equipment, libraries, lecture rooms, audiovisual systems indispensable for it to do its work, that solution is a false solution

Notes

(i) Nouns may constitute similar things in one context and not in another. One says *Voy a comprarme un libro y una revista* 'I'm going to buy a book and a magazine' (two different things), but *Los libros y (las) revistas están en el estante de arriba* 'The books and magazines are on the top shelf' (books and magazines both seen as members of the set 'publications').

(ii) If the first noun in a list is feminine and the second masculine, good style requires that the article should appear before both. One could say *las aulas y los equipos* 'lecture rooms and equipment' or *los equipos y aulas* but preferably not *las aulas y equipos*.

This rule is sometimes broken, cf *Las liebres, las perdices y faisanes, los cacé esta mañana* (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue) 'I shot the hares, partridges and pheasants this morning' (*el faisán* = 'pheasant').

(iii) In pairs of animate nouns of different sex both require the article: *el toro y la vaca* 'the bull and (the) cow', never **el toro y vaca*.

(iv) In doubtful cases retention of the articles is safer: *Tráeme los tenedores y las cucharas* 'Bring me the forks and spoons'.

3.2.5 Omission of articles in proverbs

Articles, definite and indefinite, are often omitted in proverbs and in statements that are meant to sound proverbial:

<i>Gato escaldado del agua fría huye</i>	A scalded cat runs from cold water
<i>Afectaremos a muchos turistas extranjeros, señor Presidente, y turista que se enoja, no regresa</i> (Luis Spota, Mexico, dialogue)	We'll affect a lot of foreign tourists, Mr President, and an angry tourist doesn't come back
<i>Virtudes y defectos van unidos</i>	Virtues and defects go together

3.2.6 Definite article with generic nouns

With the exceptions noted at 3.2.10, the definite article is required before generic nouns, i.e. nouns that refer to something in general. These are typically:

(a) Abstract nouns:

<i>la informalidad</i>	informality/unreliability
<i>la democracia</i>	democracy
<i>el catolicismo español</i>	Spanish catholicism

(b) Substances in general:

<i>El salvado es bueno para la digestión</i>	Bran is good for the digestion
<i>El acero inoxidable es carísimo</i>	Stainless steel is extremely expensive
<i>La sangre no tiene precio</i>	Blood has no price

Colour nouns are members of this class of noun and require the article: *el azul* 'blue', *el negro* 'black', *El amarillo es un color que no me gusta* 'Yellow is a colour I don't like'.

(c) Countable nouns which refer to all the members of their class:

<i>Los belgas beben mucha cerveza</i>	(The) Belgians (in general) drink a lot of beer
<i>Reivindicaban los derechos de la mujer moderna</i>	They were campaigning for the rights of (the) modern woman/of modern women
<i>El tigre es un animal peligroso</i>	The tiger is a dangerous animal

Notes

(i) These rules are especially binding when the noun is the subject of a verb. The article cannot be omitted in the following sentences (but see 3.2.7 for the omission of the article from lists of two or more generic nouns): *No me gusta la manzanilla* 'I don't like camomile', (lit. 'camomile doesn't please me'), *El azúcar es malo para los dientes* 'sugar is bad for the teeth'.

But when the generic noun is the object of a verb or is preceded by a preposition, the definite article may be omitted in certain circumstances. See 3.2.10 for examples.

See 3.4.2 for sentences like *Expertos americanos dicen . . .* 'American experts say . . .' in which the noun may in fact be partitive, i.e. it does not really apply to every member of the class it denotes.

(ii) Sentences like *Me gusta el vino*, *Me gustan las cerezas* are therefore ambiguous out of context: 'I like the wine/the cherries' or 'I like wine/cherries'. In practice context or intonation makes the meaning clear, or a demonstrative – *este vino* 'this wine', *estas cerezas* 'these cherries' – can be used for the first meaning.

3.2.7 Omission of the article in lists

When two or more generic nouns follow one another, all the articles may be omitted, especially in literary style.

One must say *Esto podrá interesar a los jóvenes* 'This may interest the young' (i.e. 'young people'), but in both languages one could omit the bracketed

items in *Esto podrá interesar a (los) jóvenes y (a los) viejos* 'This may interest (the) young and (the) old'.

This is presumably done to avoid the tedium of too many definite articles:

Los ingredientes con que se amasa el ser humano: amor, terror, fracaso, destino, libertad, fe, esperanza, risa, y llanto (Última Hora, Bolivia)

The ingredients that go to make up the human being: love, terror, failure, fate, freedom, faith, hope, laughter and tears

Ingleses y alemanes, en cuyos idiomas no existe la ñ, encuentran cierta dificultad en pronunciarla (instead of *Los ingleses y los alemanes*)

Englishmen and Germans, in whose languages ñ does not exist, find it somewhat difficult to pronounce

. . . esas apariencias que Historia y Tradición te exigen respetar (L. Spota, Mexico, dialogue)

Those appearances that History and Tradition require you to respect

Note

The nouns must be generic for omission to be possible. One can only say *el padre y la madre de Antonio* 'Antonio's father and mother', both nouns being specific in reference.

3.2.8 Omission of the article before partitive nouns

The article is omitted before nouns that refer not to the whole but only to part of something ('partitive' nouns):

(a) Before partitive mass (uncountable) nouns, i.e. nouns that refer only to a part of the whole:

*Quiero cerveza
Eso necesita valor
No hay agua*

I want (some) beer
That needs courage
There isn't any water/there's no water

The difference between generic and non-generic mass nouns is, however, not always obvious - as in the sentence *Como carne* 'I eat meat', where 'meat' is apparently generic. See 3.2.10 for further comments on the subject.

(b) Before partitive count nouns, i.e. countable nouns that in English could normally be preceded by 'some':

*No se te olvide traer clavos
Incluso nos dieron flores
Llevan armas*

Don't forget to bring (some) nails
They even gave us (some) flowers
They're carrying weapons

Notes

(i) Unqualified partitive nouns rarely appear in front of the verb of which they are the subject: *Caían bombas por todas partes* (not **Bombas caían por todas partes*) 'Bombs were falling everywhere'.

However, partitive nouns modified by some expression like *como ése/ese* 'like that one' may appear in front of the verb of which they are the subject: *Cosas como ésas/esas sólo/solo te pasan a ti* (example from M. Moliner) 'Things like that only happen to you', *Hombres como él no se encuentran a menudo* 'One doesn't often find men like him'.

For *Expertos americanos dicen que . . .* 'American experts say that . . .' see 3.4.2.

(ii) French and Italian regularly uses *de* or *di* before partitive nouns: *Il a des roses rouges/Ha delle rose rosse = Tiene rosas rojas* '(S)he's got some red roses'. *De* is not used in this way in Spanish, but it may occasionally appear before a demonstrative adjective to make it clear that 'some of' rather than 'all of' is meant. Compare *Tráenos de ese vino tan bueno que nos serviste ayer* 'Bring us some of that really good wine you served us yesterday', and *Tráenos ese vino tan bueno que nos serviste ayer* 'Bring us that really good wine you served us yesterday'.

3.2.9 Definite article required before nouns restricted by a qualifier

As in English, a noun that does not require the definite article when it stands alone usually requires it when it is qualified by a following word or phrase. Compare *Está hecho de oro* 'It's made of gold', and *Está hecho del oro que trajeron de las Indias* 'It's made from the gold they brought from the Indies'. Cf also *Admiramos al Cervantes humanista* 'We admire the humanist (in) Cervantes', *recuerdos de la España medieval* 'memories/souvenirs of Medieval Spain'.

This rule must be understood to override any of the rules of article omission that follow. However, a qualifier does not always make a noun specific: the resulting noun phrase may still be generic in its own right. This is especially true when the qualifier is an adjective:

<i>Está hecho de oro macizo</i>	It's made of solid gold
<i>Estamos hablando de religión antigua</i>	We're talking about ancient religion
<i>No hablo con traidores de su patria</i>	I don't talk to traitors to their own country

3.2.10 Apparent exceptions to the rules outlined in 3.2.6

The general rule given at 3.2.6 – that generic nouns take the definite article – has exceptions.

In the sentence *Yo como carne* 'I eat meat', *carne* seems to be generic: it refers to all meat and should apparently require the definite article. Such exceptions usually arise because the noun does not really refer to the whole of its class but only to a part, although this may not always be obvious. This is especially true of nouns which (a) follow prepositions or (b) are the object of certain kinds of verb.

(a) Omission after prepositions

Nouns following prepositions very often really only denote a part or an aspect of the thing they refer to. If this is the case, they take no definite article:

<i>Le gusta salir con ingleses</i>	She/He likes going out with English people (one or a few at a time, not the whole species at once)
<i>El Ministerio de Justicia</i>	The Ministry of Justice (local, not universal justice)
<i>Sólo una minoría cuenta con electricidad</i>	Only a minority have electricity (only quantities of electricity, not electricity in general)
<i>Dio una conferencia sobre poesía árabe</i>	He gave a lecture on Arabic poetry (aspects of it, not the whole thing)
<i>Me suena a mentira</i>	It sounds like a lie

(b) After certain verbs, e.g. of consuming, desiring, producing, nouns which at first sight seem generic may on examination be seen to be partitive:

<i>Los lagartos comen moscas</i>	Lizards eat flies (one or two at a time, not the whole species at once)
<i>Escribo novelas de ciencia ficción</i>	I write science-fiction novels
<i>Claro que uso jabón</i>	Of course I use soap
<i>Queremos paz</i>	We want peace

But if the verb really affects the whole of its object in general – usually the

case with verbs of human emotion like 'love', 'hate', 'admire', 'criticize', 'censure', 'reject', etc. – then the article is required:

<i>Odio las novelas de ciencia ficción</i>	I hate science-fiction novels
<i>Adoro el helado de vainilla</i>	I love vanilla ice cream
<i>Hay que combatir el terrorismo</i>	Terrorism must be fought

(c) Omission in adverbial phrases

The article is omitted in many adverbial phrases consisting of a preposition plus a noun:

<i>la confusión por antonomasia</i>	confusion personified/par excellence
<i>a cántaros</i>	in pitcherfuls
<i>en balde</i>	pointlessly/in vain
<i>a quemarropa</i>	point-blank
<i>por avión</i>	by plane
<i>en tren/coche</i>	by train/car
<i>Estamos aquí de observadores</i>	We're here as observers
<i>De niña yo sólo hablaba catalán</i>	As a little girl I only spoke Catalan

See Chapter 34 for detailed examples of prepositional usage.

Note

Omission or retention of the article with abstract and mass nouns after a preposition often depends on the point of view of the speaker. One can say either *Publicó tres artículos sobre poesía* 'He published three articles on poetry' or . . . *sobre la poesía* 'on Poetry'. The latter implies the universal concept 'Poetry'; the former implies 'aspects of poetry'. The difference is slight, and the strong modern tendency is to omit the article.

3.2.11 The definite article after *de*

When two nouns are joined by *de* to form what is effectively a compound noun, the article is omitted before the second noun. Compare *la rueda del coche* 'the wheel of/from the car', and *una rueda de coche* 'a car wheel':

<i>la carne de la vaca</i>	the meat of the cow
<i>la carne de vaca</i>	beef
<i>los sombreros de las mujeres</i>	the women's hats
<i>los sombreros de mujer</i>	women's hats
<i>el dolor de muelas</i>	toothache
<i>un crimen de pasión</i>	a crime of passion
<i>lecciones de contabilidad</i>	lessons in accountancy

Such combinations are often denoted in English by compound nouns: *la noche de la fiesta* 'the night of the party', *la noche de fiesta* 'party night'.

3.2.12 Use of the definite article after *haber* ('there is'/'there are')

Use of the articles with *haber/hay* meaning 'there is'/'there are' is discussed separately at 30.2.1 note (iii), but it is worth repeating here that Spanish does not normally allow the definite article to appear after *haber*: *Hay agua* 'There's water', *Hubo una tormenta* 'There was a storm', but *Ahí está el cartero* 'There's the postman'.

3.2.13 Omission of the definite articles in book, film and other titles

At the beginning of titles of works of literature or art the definite article is

often suppressed before nouns that are not felt to be unique entities:

<i>Política y estado bajo el régimen de Franco</i>	<i>Politics and the State under the Franco Régime</i>
<i>Casa de campo, de José Donoso</i>	<i>The Country House, by J. Donoso</i>
<i>Selección de poemas</i>	<i>Selected Poems</i>

But with unique entities or proper names the article is retained:

<i>La casa verde, de M. Vargas Llosa</i>	<i>The Green House, by . . .</i>
<i>La Iglesia en España ayer y mañana</i>	<i>The Church in Spain yesterday and tomorrow</i>

For the use of capital letters in book titles, see 39.3.2d.

3.2.14 Omission in headlines

In Spain the grammar of headline language is fairly normal and article omission follows the general rules. In Latin America a type of headline jargon has emerged which follows English in omitting articles:

<i>Ingleses toman Islas Georgias luego de combate de 2 horas (La Prensa, Peru)</i>	British take Georgias after two-hour battle
<i>Causa de deslizamiento verán expertos (idem)</i>	Experts to investigate cause of landslide
<i>Afirma divorcios producen temblor (Última Hora, Dominican Republic, quoted in Variedades 20)</i>	'Divorces cause Earthquakes' Claim

For the word order of these Latin-American headlines see 37.5.1, note (iii).

3.2.15 The definite article with names of unique entities

As in English, the definite article is used with nouns which refer to things of which there is only one.

Unlike English, Spanish also uses the definite article with mountains, volcanoes, Heaven and Hell: *El Taj Mahal, el Atlántico, el Infierno* 'Hell', *el Cielo/el Paraíso* 'Heaven'/'Paradise', *el Diablo* 'the Devil', *la Virgen* 'the Virgin', *el Everest, el Mont Blanc*.

As in English, it is not used with personal names as opposed to epithets or titles: *Dios* 'God', *Cristo* 'Christ' (very rarely *el Cristo*), *Jesucristo* 'Jesus Christ', *Satanás* 'Satan'.

For the article before ordinary personal names see 3.2.21.

3.2.16 Definite article with names of languages

Usage is capricious and departures from the following rules may occur:

(a) No article after *en*, or, usually, after *saber, aprender, hablar*:

<i>en español, en inglés</i>	in Spanish, in English
<i>Sé quechua</i>	I know Quechua
<i>Aprendo alemán, habla griego</i>	I'm learning German, he speaks Greek

(b) Optional article after *entender* 'understand', *escribir* 'write', *estudiar* 'study':

<i>Entiendo (el) inglés</i>	I understand English
<i>Escribe (el) italiano</i>	He writes Italian

(c) After *de* meaning 'from' and after other prepositions, the article is used:

<i>traducir del español al francés</i>	to translate from Spanish to French
<i>una palabra del griego</i>	a word from Greek
<i>Comparado con el ruso, el español parece poco complicado</i>	Compared with Russian, Spanish seems uncomplicated

(d) After *de* meaning 'of', the article is used only if the whole language is meant: *curso de español* 'Spanish course' (really 'aspects of Spanish'), *dificultades del español* 'difficulties of Spanish' (in general), *las sutilezas del japonés* 'the subtleties of Japanese';

(e) After *traducir* 'translate', *dominar* 'master', *chapurrear* 'speak badly', *destrozar* 'murder' and other verbs and prepositions not discussed above, the article is used: *Domina perfectamente el portugués* 'He's a complete master of Portuguese', *Chapurrea el inglés* 'He speaks broken English';

(f) If the language is the subject of a verb it requires the article:

<i>El francés es difícil</i>	French is difficult
<i>El español es una lengua hermosa</i>	Spanish is a beautiful language

(g) If the language is qualified by a following word or phrase, the article is required:

<i>el español de Colombia</i>	the Spanish of Colombia
<i>el inglés que se habla en Tennessee</i>	the English spoken in Tennessee

3.2.17 Definite article with names of countries

This is a difficult problem since spoken usage varies and is out of line with the most modern written styles. *El País* (*Libro de estilo* 8.28) orders its journalists to write all countries without the article except *la India*, *el Reino Unido* 'the United Kingdom' and *los Países Bajos* 'the Low Countries'; one even sees *en Reino Unido* in advertisements.¹

The rules of everyday spoken language seem to be:

- (a) Obligatory: *la India*, *El Salvador*, *El Reino Unido* 'the United Kingdom';
- (b) Usual: *el Camerún* 'Cameroon', *el Congo*, *el Líbano* 'Lebanon', *la China*, *el Oriente Medio* 'The Middle East', *el Senegal*, *el Sudán*, *la Somalia*, *el Yemen*;
- (c) Optional: (*la*) *Arabia Saudita*, (*la*) *Argentina* (article always used in Argentina itself), (*el*) *Brasil*, (*el*) *Canadá*, (*el*) *Ecuador*, (*las*) *Filipinas* 'The Philippines', (*el*) *Irak*, (*el*) *Irán*, (*el*) *Japón*, (*el*) *Nepal*, (*el*) *Pakistán*, (*el*) *Paraguay*, (*el*) *Perú*, (*el*) *Tibet*, (*el*) *Uruguay*, (*el*) *Vietnam*.

The article is frequently heard with these nouns in everyday speech, probably more so in Latin America than in Spain.

Other countries do not take the article: *tres años en Australia/Egipto/Noruega/Europa Oriental/África del Sur* 'three years in Australia/Egypt/Norway/Eastern Europe/South Africa'.

Notes

(i) 'The United States' is either *los Estados Unidos* (plural agreement) or *Estados Unidos* (singular agreement and no article). The latter is common in Latin-American usage and is the only form allowed in *El País* (Spain).

Gran Bretaña 'Great Britain' does not take the article, but *el Reino Unido* 'the United Kingdom' does.

(ii) In older texts, particularly in solemn diplomatic language, names of countries occasionally appear with the article: *la Francia*, *la Inglaterra*, etc.

¹ In this respect we must differ from Batchelor and Pountain (1992), 297, who say that 'use of the article is more typical of the written registers'. The reverse is true.

(iii) All place names require the article when they are qualified or restricted by a following adjective, phrase or clause, unless the qualifier is part of an official name:

<i>la España contemporánea</i>	contemporary Spain
<i>la Suecia que yo conocía</i>	the Sweden I knew

but

<i>en Australia Occidental</i>	in Western Australia
<i>en Irlanda del Norte</i>	in Northern Ireland

3.2.18 Definite article with provinces, regions, cities and towns

Some place names include the article as an inseparable feature: *Los Ángeles*, *El Cairo*², *La Coruña*, *El Escorial*, *La Habana* 'Havana', *El Havre*, *La Haya* 'the Hague', *la Mancha*, *La Meca* 'Mecca', *La Paz*, *la Plata*, *la Rioja*, etc.

Otherwise the article is not used – unless 3.2.9 applies, as in *el Buenos Aires de hoy* 'Buenos Aires today', *la Roma de Cicerón* 'Cicero's Rome', etc.

3.2.19 Definite article before names of streets, roads, squares, etc.

The definite article is used before roads, squares, avenues, lanes, alleys and similar places:

<i>Vive en la plaza/la calle de la Independencia</i>	He lives in Independence square/street
<i>la panadería de la avenida Fleming</i>	the baker's in Fleming Avenue

3.2.20 Definite articles with days of the week

The definite article appears with days of the week, but it does not appear when the day is the predicate of *ser* 'to be', or after *de* when it means 'from'. The article is also not used in dates:

<i>Llegan el martes</i>	They're arriving on Tuesday
<i>cerrado los viernes</i>	closed on Friday(s)
<i>Odio los lunes</i>	I hate Mondays
<i>El miércoles es cuando habrá menos</i>	Wednesday's the day there'll be least
<i>a partir del domingo</i>	after Sunday

but

<i>Hoy es lunes</i>	Today is Monday
<i>Trabajo de lunes a jueves</i>	I work from Monday to Thursday
<i>miércoles 23 de marzo de 1943</i>	Wednesday 23 March 1943

When *de* means 'of' the article is used:

<i>Ocurrió en la noche del viernes</i>	It happened on Friday night
--	-----------------------------

3.2.21 Definite article with personal names

The definite article occasionally appears before the surname of very famous women: *la Loren*, *la Garbo*, *la Callas*, *la Pardo Bazán*.

It is not used in this way before the names of men, except occasionally in law courts to refer to the accused.

² The article is usually written with a capital letter only in the case of cities (Seco 1992, 162). This is the practice of *El País*.

Use of the article before first names, e.g. *la María, la Josefa, el Mario*, is considered substandard or regional or typical of court-room language or police reports, unless the name is qualified, as in *la simpática Inés* 'the kindly Inés'.

The definite article usually appears before nicknames: *El Che nunca fue derrotado* "'Che" (Guevara) was never defeated' (*Cuba Internacional, Cuba*)³, *Detuvieron a Ramón Pérez "el Duque"* 'They arrested Ramón Pérez, (alias) "the Duke"' (in Spain virtually all notorious criminals are identified by nicknames).

In some places, e.g. Chile and Catalonia, use of the article before first names is quite common even in educated speech, but it is generally best avoided by foreign learners since it may sound condescending. Students of Portuguese should remember to omit the article in Spanish: *o António quer um café* = *Antonio quiere un café*.

3.2.22 Definite article with sports teams

The masculine article is used before sports teams: *el Granada* 'Granada FC', *el Manchester United*, *el Argentina*.

3.2.23 Definite article before nouns of family relationship

Abuelo/abuela takes the article: *Entré a dar un beso a la abuela* 'I went in to give grandmother a kiss', *El abuelo comía en silencio* 'Grandfather was eating in silence'.

Tío/tía 'uncle/aunt' also take the article: *Di un beso a la tía* 'I gave auntie a kiss'. But if the person is named the article is omitted – at least in educated language: *Le di un beso a tía Julia* 'I kissed aunt Julia'. (This rule may not be observed everywhere, but children in Madrid are – or were until recently – rebuked for saying *a la tía Julia*.)

In rural areas *tío/tía* may be used before the first names of local worthies: *el tío José/la tía Paca* 'old José/'old Paca'.⁴

With *papá/mamá* use of the article may also sound uneducated to some speakers if the noun stands alone: *Dale un beso a papá* 'Give daddy a kiss'.

3.2.24 Definite article with personal titles

The definite article is used before the title of a person being talked about: *el señor Moreira, el profesor Smith, el general Rodríguez, el presidente Belaúnde, el doctor Fleming, el padre Blanco* 'Father Blanco'. It is not used if the person is directly addressed: *Pase usted, señor Sender/señor Presidente/padre Blanco* 'Come in Mr Sender/Mr President/ Father Blanco'.

The definite article is not, however, used before *don, doña, fray, san, santa, sor*, or before foreign titles like *míster, monsieur, Herr*: *don Miguel, fray Bentos, santa Teresa, sor Juana, míster Smith*, etc.

³ But a few lines above in the same article *Che nunca fue derrotado*, no doubt because the revolutionary hero's nickname 'Che' is sometimes felt to be a proper name.

⁴ *El tío, la tía* are nowadays very frequent in Spain as a rather vulgar word roughly meaning 'guy' (French *type*): *No conozco al tío ese* 'I don't know that guy'/(British) 'bloke'. Latin-Americans and well-spoken Spaniards use the more refined *el tipo*.

Notes

(i) *Don/doña* are used before the first names of older persons of respected social status and on envelopes (less now than formerly): *señor don Miguel Ramírez, doña Josefa, don Miguel*.

(ii) For the military forms of address *mi general* 'General', *mi coronel* 'Colonel' see 8.3.3.

3.2.25 Definite article in apposition

The definite article is omitted in apposition:

Madrid, capital de España
Simón Bolívar, libertador de América

Madrid, the capital of Spain
Simón Bolívar, the liberator of Latin
America

But it is retained:

(a) if the following phrase is used to remove a possible confusion of identity: *Miró, el autor* 'Miró, the author' (not the painter); *Córdoba, la ciudad argentina* 'Córdoba, the Argentine city' (not the one in Spain).

(b) if the following phrase is a comparative or superlative: *Cervantes, el mayor novelista español* 'Cervantes, the greatest Spanish novelist', *Joaquín, el más listo de los dos* 'Joaquín, the cleverer of the two'.

(c) if the phrase is qualified by a following word or phrase:

Javier Marcos, el arquitecto que diseñó las dos fuentes

Javier Marcos, the architect who
designed the two fountains

3.2.26 Definite article with numbered nouns

Unlike English, nouns identified by a number take the article:

Vivo en el piso 38
una disposición del artículo 277 de la Constitución
unas fotos del 93
el diez por ciento

I live in apartment 38
a provision in Art. 277 of the Constitution
some photos from the year 1993
ten per cent

The article is also used in expressions like *Murió a los ochenta años* 'He died at the age of eighty', but not when translating 'n years old': *Tiene ochenta años* 'He's eighty'.

3.2.27 Definite article in phrases denoting place

The following require the definite article in Spanish:

a/en/de la cama
a/en/de la iglesia
al/en el/del cielo/infierno
al/en el/del hospital
en la cárcel/en el colegio/en el trabajo
en el escenario
en la televisión
en el espacio
en el mar
debajo de la tierra (but *bajo tierra*)

to/in/from bed
to/in/from church
to/in/from Heaven/Hell
to/in/from hospital
in prison/at school/at work
on stage
on television
in space
at sea, on/in the sea
underground

<i>en todas partes</i> (cf. <i>en todos los sitios</i> <i>a/en/de casa</i> (often <i>a/en/de la casa</i> in Lat. Am.) <i>en clase</i>	everywhere everywhere) at/in/from home in class
---	--

Some speakers differentiate *estar en la cama* 'to be in bed' and *estar en cama* 'to be ill/sick in bed', but the distinction is not universal.

3.2.28 Definite article after the verb *jugar*

The verb *jugar* requires the article: *jugar a la pelota* 'to play ball/with a ball', *jugar al ajedrez* 'to play chess', *jugar a las cartas* 'to play cards', *jugar al escondite* 'to play hide and seek'.

3.2.29 Definite article with personal pronouns

The definite article is required after first and second-person plural pronouns in phrases like the following: *ustedes los uruguayos* 'you Uruguayans', *nosotros los pobres* 'we poor people', *vosotras las españolas* 'you Spanish women . . .' It is also used when the pronoun is deleted:

<i>Las mujeres de los mineros siempre estamos en viño pensando en los hombres</i> (A. López Salinas, Spain, dialogue)	We miners' wives are always on tenterhooks thinking about the men
<i>Los ingleses siempre ocultáis vuestras emociones</i>	You English always hide your emotions

3.2.30 Colloquial use of *la de*

In familiar language, *la de* may mean 'lots of':

<i>Con la de números de abogado que vienen en la guía . . .</i> . . . <i>la de veces que han dicho eso</i>	With all the dozens of lawyers' numbers there are in the directory the number of times they've said that!
. . . <i>la de lágrimas que solté</i> (L. Sepúlveda, Chile, dialogue)	the amount of tears I shed . . .

3.3 The indefinite article

3.3.1 Forms of the indefinite article

	Masculine	Feminine
Singular	<i>un</i>	<i>una</i>
Plural	<i>unos</i>	<i>unas</i>

For the use of *un* before feminine nouns beginning with a stressed *a*, e.g. *un arma*, *un alma*, see 3.1.2.

3.3.2 General remarks on the use of the indefinite article

In general terms, use of the indefinite article in Spanish corresponds to the use of 'a'/'an' in English, but there are two important differences:

(a) it is omitted before singular count nouns in certain contexts described at 3.3.6–12: *Tengo coche* 'I've got a car', *Mario es ingeniero* 'Mario's an engineer', *Lo abrió sin llave* 'He opened it without a key', *Es mentira* 'It's a lie'

(b) It can appear in the plural: *unos pantalones* 'a pair of trousers', *Han organizado unas manifestaciones* 'They've organized demonstrations', *Son unos genios incomprendidos* 'They're misunderstood geniuses'.

For *uno/una* as an impersonal pronoun see 28.7.1.

3.3.3 The indefinite article in Spanish and French

Use of the indefinite article corresponds quite closely in these two Romance languages, but Spanish almost never uses partitive *de*, cf *Tengo vino* and *J'ai du vin* 'I've got some wine' (see 3.2.8 note (ii) for discussion) and French has no plural form of *un/une*, cf. Spanish *unos guantes* 'some gloves', French *des gants*. Unlike French, Spanish regularly omits the article in sentences of the type *Tiene secretaria* 'He's got a secretary', cf *Il a une secrétaire*. See 3.3.8.

3.3.4 Indefinite article before more than one noun

When more than one noun occurs in a sequence, the indefinite article is required before each noun. English tends to omit the article in such cases:

<i>Entraron un hombre y una mujer</i>	A man and (a) woman entered
<i>Compré una máquina de escribir y una papelera para mi despacho</i>	I bought a typewriter and (a) wastepaper basket for my office

However, omission is necessary when the nouns refer to the same thing or to different aspects of the same thing:

<i>una actriz y cantante</i>	an actress and singer (same woman)
<i>un cuchillo y abrelatas</i>	a combined knife and tin-opener
<i>Este libro está escrito con una maestría y delicadeza insólitas</i>	This novel is written with unusual skill and delicacy

3.3.5 Omission before singular nouns: general

Un/una is quite often omitted before singular count nouns in circumstances that are difficult to explain.

This happens whenever the generic or universal features of the noun are being stressed. Compare *Pepe tiene secretaria* 'Pepe's got a secretary' (like most bosses) and *Pepe tiene una secretaria que habla chino* 'Pepe's got a Chinese-speaking secretary' (unlike most bosses).

The following sections 3.3.6–13 illustrate the main cases in which *un/una* are omitted. For the omission of *un/una* in proverbs, see 3.2.5.

3.3.6 Omission before nouns denoting professions, occupations, social status, sex

(This is a very common case of the phenomenon described in 3.3.7.)

Un/una are regularly omitted before nouns which describe profession, occupation, social status, sex, etc. In this case the noun can be thought of as a sort of adjective that simply allocates the noun to a general type:

<i>Soy piloto/son buzos</i>	I'm a pilot/they're divers
<i>Mi mujer es enfermera</i>	My wife's a nurse
<i>Es soltero/es casada</i> (compare <i>está casada</i> 'she's married'; see 29.4.1a for further details)	He's a bachelor/she's a married woman

<i>Se hizo detective</i>	He became a detective
. . . <i>y aunque Alejandra era mujer . . .</i>	. . . and although Alejandra was a woman . . .
(E. Sábato, Argentina)	
<i>Veo que es usted mujer de buen gusto</i>	I see you're a woman of good taste

But nouns denoting personal qualities rather than membership of a profession or other group require the article: compare *Es negrero* 'He is a slave-trader' and *Es un negrero* 'He's a "slave driver"' (i.e. makes you work too hard), *Eres un genio* 'You're a genius', *Es un ladrón* 'He's a thief' (i.e. not professionally).

Notes

(i) The article is retained if it means 'one of . . .': — *¿Quién es ese que ha saludado? — Es un profesor* 'Who was that who said hello?' 'He's one of the teachers'.

(ii) If a noun of the type discussed above is qualified, it usually becomes particularized (non-generic) and therefore requires the article. Compare *es actor* 'He's an actor' and *Es un actor que nunca encuentra trabajo* 'He's an actor who never finds work'.

But the resulting noun phrase may still be a recognized profession or a generic type, so no article will be used: *Soy profesor de español*. See 3.3.9 for discussion.

3.3.7 Omission of the indefinite article with *ser* and nouns not included in 3.3.6

Omission of the indefinite article after *ser* is frequent (a) in certain common phrases, (b) in literary style. A rare English counterpart is the optional omission of 'a' with 'part': 'This is (a) part of our heritage' *Esto es (una) parte de nuestro patrimonio*.

Omission is more common in negative sentences and apparently more frequent in Peninsular Spanish than in Latin-American.

(a) In the following phrases omission seems to be optional:

<i>Es (una) coincidencia</i>	It's a coincidence
<i>Es (una) cuestión de dinero</i>	It's a question of money
<i>Es (una) víctima de las circunstancias</i>	He/she's a victim of circumstances

No clear rule can be formulated since the article is retained in other common phrases of a similar type:

<i>Es una lata</i> (colloquial)	It's a nuisance
<i>Es una pena</i>	It's a pity
<i>Es un problema</i>	It's a problem
<i>Ha sido un éxito</i>	It was a success

Omission may occur after the negative verb even though it is not usual after the positive verb:

<i>No es molestia/problema</i>	It's no bother/problem
<i>No es exageración</i>	It's no exaggeration
<i>No es desventaja</i>	It's not a disadvantage

(b) In other cases, omission often, but not always, produces a literary effect:

<i>Es mar de veras</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peruvian dialogue)	It's (a) real sea
<i>La codorniz es ave tiernísima</i> (M. Delibes)	The quail is an extremely tender bird (to eat)
<i>¡Váyanse! ¿Qué vienen a ver? ¡Esta es cuestión que a ustedes no les importa!</i> (J. Ibarguengoitia, Mexico, dialogue)	Go away! What have you come here to look at? This is an affair that has nothing to do with you!

Es privilegio peculiar de ciertos linajes de pura sangre celta (J. L. Borges, Argentina) It is a special privilege of certain thoroughbred Celtic families

In all the above examples the article could be used.

Notes

(i) If the following noun is not generic but merely implies the possession of certain qualities, *un/una* is used: *El hombre es un lobo para el hombre* 'Man is a wolf to man' (but not a member of the wolf species), *Esos muchachos son unas niñas* 'Those boys are (behaving like) little girls'.

(ii) In literary styles, omission of *un/una* is normal in definitions when the subject comes first: *Novela es toda obra de ficción que . . .* 'A novel is any work of fiction that . . .'.

(iii) Omission of the indefinite article before a qualified noun tends to produce an archaic or heavily literary effect, as in *Entra una señora con sombrero verde con plumas de avestruz* 'A lady with a green hat with ostrich feathers enters', where *un sombrero verde* would nowadays be much more normal.

Similarly, where Unamuno wrote *Era un viejecillo [. . .] con levitón de largos bolsillos* 'He was a little old man . . . with a large frock-coat with deep pockets', a modern writer might prefer *un levitón*. Purists occasionally complain about this increasing use of the indefinite article, which they attribute to English or French influence.

(iv) For constructions like *Expertos americanos dicen que . . .* 'American experts say that . . .' see 3.4.2.

3.3.8 Omission of *un/una* after other verbs

Spanish omits *un/una* after a number of verbs such as *tener* 'have', *sacar* 'take'/'draw out' (with cinema tickets, etc. = 'buy'/'book'), *buscar* 'look for', *llevar* 'wear', when their object is a certain type of noun.

These nouns refer to things of which one would normally have or be carrying only one at a time: umbrella, pen, spoon, nanny, valet, cook, hat, etc. Sometimes the noun denotes some object or person – wife, garden, video recorder, telephone, freezer, lover – which in some way defines the social status of the speaker:

<i>¿Tenías idea de lo que serías capaz de hacer?</i>	Did you have any idea of what you'd be able to do?
<i>Ya he sacado entrada</i>	I've already got a ticket
<i>Vamos a buscarle novia</i>	Let's look for a girlfriend for him
<i>Siempre lleva anillo</i>	He always wears a ring
<i>Hubo quien se ofendió y sacó pistola</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)	There was one person who took offence/(US) 'offense' and pulled a gun
<i>Barcelona tiene puerto y parque y tranvía y metro y autobús y cine</i> (L. Goytisolo, Spain)	Barcelona has a port, park, tramway, metro, buses and cinema(s)
<i>Voy a pedir hora</i> (<i>una hora</i> = one hour or a specific time)	I'm going to ask for an appointment

The indefinite article reappears if the particular identity of the object is relevant:

<i>Llevaba una falda blanca</i>	She was wearing a white skirt
<i>Tenía [. . .] una carita de chico pecoso . . .</i> (F. Umbral, Spain)	She had a cute face like a freckled boy's

Use of *un/una* with unqualified nouns may therefore hint at some suppressed comment: *Tiene una mujer . . .* 'He's got a wife . . . (and she is . . .)', *Tiene un coche . . .* 'You should see his car . . .'. This may sound insinuating.

Note

If it would be normal to have more than one of the things denoted, or if the idea of 'one' is relevant, the article must be used: *¿Tienes un hermano?* 'Do you have a brother?' – not **¿Tienes hermano?*:

¿Tienes un dólar?

Have you got a dollar?

¿Has comprado una novela?

Have you bought a novel?

Tiene un novio en Burgos y otro en Huelva

She's got one boyfriend in Burgos and another in Huelva

3.3.9 Retention of indefinite article before qualified nouns

As soon as nouns are qualified (restricted) by a clause, phrase or adjective they become specific and the article is obligatory: *Tengo padre* 'I've got a father', *Tengo un padre que es inaguantable* 'I've got an unbearable father'. But if the resulting noun phrase is still generic the article may still be omitted: *Tú eres hombre respetable* 'You're a respectable man', *Es pastor protestante* 'He's a protestant vicar'.

Note

This rule also applies in the plural: *Es un conservador arrepentido/Son unos conservadores arrepentidos* 'He's a repentant conservative'/'They're repentant conservatives':

Es un ejemplo/Son unos ejemplos que hemos encontrado en tu novela

It's an example/They're examples we found in your novel

El tipo había estudiado su carrera en

The fellow/guy had studied for

Inglaterra y en seguida me llené de unos celos juveniles hacia él (F. Umbral, Spain)

his degree in England, and I was immediately filled with juvenile jealousy towards him

3.3.10 Omission of indefinite article in apposition

The indefinite article is normally omitted in appositive phrases in written language:

El Español de hoy, lengua en ebullición

Spanish today, a Language in Ferment (book title)

a orillas del Huisne, arroyo de apariencia tranquila . . . (J. L. Borges, Argentina)

On the banks of the Huisne, a seemingly tranquil stream . . .

But in informal language, or if the noun in apposition is qualified by an adjective or clause, the article may optionally be retained:

. . . el Coronel Gaddafi de Libia, un ardiente admirador del ayatollah Jomeini . . . (Cambio16, Spain)

. . . Colonel Gaddafi of Libya, a fervent admirer of Ayatollah Khomeini . . .

3.3.11 Indefinite article to distinguish nouns from adjectives

Many Spanish nouns are indistinguishable in form from adjectives: use of *un/una* indicates that the noun is meant:

Juan es cobarde

John is cowardly

Juan es un cobarde

John is a coward

Papá es (un) fascista

Father is a fascist

Soy (un) extranjero

I'm foreign/a foreigner

Papá es fascista implies 'he's a committed Fascist', whereas *Papá es un fascista* suggests 'he acts like a fascist'. The indefinite article is also used in the plural so as to retain the distinction: *Son desgraciados* 'They're unhappy', *Son unos desgraciados* 'They're wretches'.

3.3.12 Omission after *como*, *a modo/manera de*, *por*, *sin*, *con*

(a) The indefinite article is omitted after *a manera de*, *a modo de* and after *como* when it means 'in the capacity of' or 'by way of':

<i>a manera de prólogo</i>	by way of a prologue
<i>a modo de bastón</i>	as/like a walking stick
<i>como ejemplo</i>	as an example
<i>Utilicé mi zapato como martillo</i>	I used my shoe as a hammer
<i>Vino como ayudante</i>	He came as an assistant

(b) It is omitted after *por* when it means 'instead of', 'in place of' or 'for' in phrases like: *Por respuesta le dio un beso* 'She gave him a kiss as a reply', *Por toda comida me dieron un plato de arroz* 'For a meal they gave me a plate of rice' (i.e. 'all I got for a meal was . . .').

(c) It is usually omitted after *sin* 'without':

<i>No lo vas a poder cortar sin cuchillo/No vas a poder cortarlo sin cuchillo</i>	You won't be able to cut it without a knife
<i>Ha venido sin camisa</i>	He's come without a shirt on
<i>un gato sin cola</i>	a cat without a tail

But if the idea of 'one' is stressed, the article is required:

<i>sin una peseta</i>	without a (single) peseta
<i>sin un amigo a quien contar sus problemas</i>	without a friend to tell his problems to

(d) It is omitted after *con* when it means 'wearing', 'equipped with' and in many other adverbial phrases:

<i>Siempre va con abrigo</i>	He always wears an overcoat
<i>una casa con jardín</i>	a house with a garden
<i>La Esfinge [. . .] es un león echado en la tierra y con cabeza de hombre (J. L. Borges, Argentina)</i>	The Sphinx is a lion stretched out on the ground, with a man's head
<i>Lo escribí con lápiz con ganas/violencia</i>	I wrote it with a pencil enthusiastically/violently
etc.	

3.3.13 Omission in exclamations, after *qué*, and before *tal*, *medio*, *cierto*, *otro*

The following constructions differ from English:

<i>¡Extraña coincidencia!</i>	What a strange coincidence!
<i>¡Qué cantidad!/ruido!/pena!</i>	What a quantity/noise/pity!
<i>¿Cómo ha podido hacer tal/semillante cosa? (colloquially <i>una cosa así; un tal</i> = 'a certain')</i>	How could he have done such a thing?
<i>media pinta/medio kilo</i>	half a pint/kilo
<i>cierta mujer/otra cerveza</i>	a certain woman/another beer

See 9.7 for *cierto* and 9.13 for *otro*.

3.4 Unos/unas

Spanish is unusual in that the indefinite article can be used in the plural with a variety of meanings.

For a comparison of *algunos* and *unos*, which may both sometimes mean 'some', see 9.4.2.

3.4.1 Uses of *unos/unas*

(The pronoun *uno* is discussed at 9.3 note (iv) and 28.7.1.)

The Spanish indefinite article appears in the plural with various meanings :

(a) before numbers, 'approximately':

<i>unos trescientos mil pesos</i>	about 300,000 pesos
<i>Se calculó que el terremoto duró unos 25 segundos</i>	It was calculated that the earthquake lasted some twenty-five seconds

(b) before plural nouns, 'some':

<i>Le dieron unas monedas</i>	They gave him some coins
<i>Tomamos unas cervezas</i>	We had some beers
<i>Todavía tenía unos restos de fe</i>	He still had some vestiges of faith

When used thus it may merely moderate the force of a following noun. It can therefore add a modest note and may sometimes be the equivalent of the colloquial disclaimer 'just a couple of':

<i>El gobierno ha organizado unas elecciones (Cambio16, Spain)</i>	The government has organized elections
--	--

(Omission of *unas* would imply something grander, e.g. general elections.)

<i>Sonreí . . . pero fue peor: unos dientes amarillos aparecieron (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain)</i>	I smiled, but it was worse: a set of yellow teeth appeared (or 'some yellow teeth appeared')
<i>Mira estas fotos – son unas vistas tomadas en Guadalajara</i>	Look at these photos – they're a couple of shots taken in Guadalajara

But sometimes use of *unos* makes little difference:

<i>El pacifismo debería traducirse en unos comportamientos políticos que no tuviesen ninguna indulgencia con los violentos (La Vanguardia, unos deletable)</i>	Pacifism ought to be translated into (a set of) patterns of political behaviour which show no indulgence towards the violent
--	--

(c) Before nouns that only appear in the plural, to show that only one is meant. If the noun denotes a symmetrical object like trousers, binoculars, scissors, *unos/unas* means 'a pair of':

<i>Me he caído por unas escaleras</i>	I've fallen/I fell down some/a flight of stairs
<i>Voy a tomarme unas vacaciones</i>	I'm going to have a holiday/vacation
<i>Llevaba unos pantalones a rayas</i>	He was wearing striped trousers
<i>Se había puesto unas gafas que no intelectualizaban su rostro (F. Umbral, Spain)</i>	She had put on a pair of glasses which did not give her face an intellectual air
<i>He comprado unas cortinas</i>	I've bought a pair of curtains

(d) Use of *unos/unas* may show that the plural noun which follows is not being used generically:

<i>Son niñas</i>	They're little girls
<i>Son unas niñas</i>	They're (acting like) little girls
<i>Son payasos</i>	They're (circus) clowns
<i>Son unos payasos</i>	They're (acting like) clowns

(e) *Unos/unas* may be needed to show that the following noun is a noun and not an adjective or noun used as an adjective. See 3.3.11 for examples.

3.4.2 Omission of *unos/unas*

There is a growing tendency in written Spanish, especially in journalism, to avoid the use of *unos* (and of *algunos*) in sentences of the kind:

Expertos americanos afirman que . . . American experts claim that . . .

It is not clear whether *los*, *algunos* or *unos* has been omitted here. The omission is no doubt a journalistic ruse designed to gloss over the fact that only one or two experts were actually consulted. Spoken Spanish requires *los* if the meaning is 'all American experts', *algunos* if the meaning is 'some', and *unos* if 'a few' is intended.

In other cases omission produces a literary effect:

<i>Eléctricas letras verdes intermitentes anunciaron la salida del vuelo</i> (M. Vázquez Montalbán, Spain)	Flashing green electric lights announced the departure of the flight
---	---

where *unas letras verdes eléctricas e intermitentes . . .* would have been more normal.

4

Adjectives

4.1 General

(a) Spanish adjectives agree with nouns and pronouns in number and, if possible, gender. This means that nearly all adjectives have at least two forms, e.g. *natural/naturales*, and in many cases four different forms: *bueno/buena/buenos/buenas*. However, a small group of rather unusual adjectives, e.g. *macho*, *violeta*, are invariable in form. They are discussed at 4.2.3.

(b) One problem facing the student of Spanish is the position of an adjective with respect to the noun it modifies, the difference between *un problema difícil* and *un difícil problema* 'a difficult problem' or *una nube lejana* and *una lejana nube* 'a distant cloud' being virtually untranslatable in English. This problem is discussed in section 4.11.

(c) It is necessary to distinguish 'descriptive' and 'attributive'¹ adjectives. Descriptive adjectives can be thought of as replacing a simple relative clause: *un libro aburrido* 'a boring book' is the same as *un libro que es aburrido* 'a book that is boring'. Attributive adjectives usually replace a noun + *de*: *la presión sanguínea* 'blood pressure' = *la presión de la sangre*, *un programa televisivo* = *un programa de televisión*. Unlike descriptive adjectives, attributive adjectives always follow the noun. They are discussed in detail at 4.12.

(d) As in other Romance languages, adjectives in Spanish become nouns if an article, demonstrative, numeral or other qualifier is added: *viejo/el viejo* 'old/'the old man' or 'the old one', *enfermo/estos enfermos* 'ill/'these ill/sick people', *reptil/tres reptiles* 'reptilian/'three reptiles', etc. In this respect the difference between adjectives and nouns in Spanish is not very clear, especially in view of the fact that nouns can occasionally be used like adjectives, as in *Ella es más mujer que Ana* 'She's more (of a) woman than Ana' (or 'more feminine'). Such adjectival use of nouns is discussed at 4.10.

However, although adjectives can serve as nouns, adjectives are nevertheless formed in unpredictable ways from nouns: *automóvil* > *automovilístico*, *legislación* > *legislativo*, *montaña* > *montañoso*, *leche* > *lácteo* 'milk', etc. Only a few nouns, e.g. *miembro*, *virgen*, function as adjectives without a change of form, cf. *los países miembros* 'member countries', *las tierras vírgenes* 'virgin territories', etc.

¹ This is the term used in *Collins Spanish-English/English-Spanish Dictionary*. Judge and Healey (1983) use the term 'relational'.

(e) Some adjectives can be used with object pronouns and the verb *ser*: *Me es importante* 'It's important to me', *Nos es imprescindible* 'He's indispensable to us', *Estas materias primas le son muy necesarias* 'These raw materials are very necessary for him/you'; but most cannot. See 11.9 for discussion.

(f) Adjectival participles ending in *-ante*, *-iente* are discussed under participles at 19.4.

(g) The gerund in *-ndo* is a verbal form in Spanish and must not therefore be used as an adjective: *una muñeca que anda* 'a walking doll', not *una muñeca andando* 'a doll walking'. For two exceptions to this rule, see 4.4; for a general discussion of the gerund see Chapter 20.

(h) A few adjectives may also function as adverbs, e.g. *Los teléfonos están fatal* 'The phones are in a dreadful state'. See 31.3.3. for discussion.

4.2 Morphology of adjectives

Spanish adjectives are of three types:

Type 1 show agreement in number and gender with the noun.

Type 2 show agreement for number but not for gender.

Type 3 are invariable in form (few, and mostly colours).

4.2.1 Type 1 adjectives (marked for number and gender)

These include adjectives whose masculine singular ends in:

-o,	with the rare exceptions noted at 4.2.3
-án	
-és	except <i>cortés</i> 'courteous' and <i>descortés</i> 'discourteous', which are type 2
-ín	usually a diminutive suffix (but see note iii)
-ón	usually an augmentative suffix (but see note iii)
-or	with the dozen or so exceptions listed in note (i)
-ote	
-ete	

and adjectives of place of origin or nationality not ending in *-a*, *-í*, *-e*, *-al* or *-ar*, e.g. *español/española*, but not *celta*, *iraní*, *provenzal*, *balear*, which are type 2. (*Español* and *andaluz* are in fact the only two common type 1 adjectives ending in a consonant other than *-n*.)

The feminine of type 1 adjectives is formed thus:

- (1) if the masculine singular ends in a vowel, change the vowel to *-a*: *colombiano* > *colombiana*² 'Colombian';
- (2) if the masculine singular ends in a consonant, add *-a*: *pillín* > *pillina* 'mischievous'. By the normal rules of spelling (explained at 39.2.1), an accent on the final vowel of the masculine is dropped.

² Adjectives in Spanish are almost always written with a lower-case letter. See 39.3.1 for occasional exceptions.

The plural of type 1 adjectives is formed thus:

- (1) add *-s* to a vowel: *colombiano* > *colombianos*, *colombiana* > *colombianas*;
- (2) add *-es* to a consonant to form the masculine, *pillín* > *pillines*, and *-as* to form the feminine *pillina* > *pillinas*. By the normal rules of spelling, a final *-z* is changed to *c* before *e*. Examples:

	Singular	Plural	
Masc.	<i>bueno</i>	<i>buenos</i>	good
Fem.	<i>buena</i>	<i>buenas</i>	
	<i>musulmán</i>	<i>musulmanes</i>	Muslim
	<i>musulmana</i>	<i>musulmanas</i>	
	<i>aragonés</i>	<i>aragoneses</i>	Aragonese
	<i>aragonesa</i>	<i>aragonesas</i>	
	<i>saltarín</i>	<i>saltarines</i>	restless, fidgety
	<i>saltarina</i>	<i>saltarinas</i>	
	<i>mandón</i>	<i>mandones</i>	bossy
	<i>mandona</i>	<i>mandonas</i>	
	<i>hablador</i>	<i>habladores</i>	talkative
	<i>habladora</i>	<i>habladoras</i>	
	<i>regordete</i>	<i>regordetes</i>	plump
	<i>regordeta</i>	<i>regordetas</i>	
	<i>español</i>	<i>españoles</i>	Spanish
	<i>española</i>	<i>españolas</i>	
	<i>andaluz</i>	<i>andaluces</i>	Andalusian
	<i>andaluza</i>	<i>andaluzas</i>	

Notes

(i) Adjectives in *-or* that have a comparative meaning are all type 2, i.e. they have no separate feminine form. These are: *anterior* 'previous', *exterior* 'outer', *inferior* 'lower'/'inferior', *interior* 'inner'/'interior', *mayor* 'greater'/'older', *mejor* 'better', *menor* 'minor'/'smaller/younger', *peor* 'worse', *posterior* 'later'/'subsequent', *superior** 'upper'/'superior', *ulterior* 'later'/'further'.

*Exception: *la madre superiora* 'mother superior'.

(ii) *Cortés*, 'courteous' and *descortés* 'discourteous' are type 2 adjectives. *Montés* 'wild' (i.e. not domesticated) is also usually type 2: *el gato montés* 'wild/untamed cat', *la cabra montés* 'wild goat', *las hierbas monteses* 'mountain herbs'.

(iii) One or two adjectives ending in *-ín* or *-ón* are type 2: *marrón* 'brown'³, *afín* 'related'/'similar': *una camisa marrón*, 'a brown shirt', *ideas afines* 'related ideas'.

4.2.2 Type 2 adjectives (no separate feminine form)

No difference between masculine and feminine. This class includes (with the exceptions noted above):

- (a) all adjectives whose masculine singular ends in a consonant other than *-n* or *-és*;
- (b) adjectives ending in *-a*, *-e*, *-ú*, *-í*.

The plural is formed:

³There is no single word for 'brown' in Peninsular Spanish. *Marrón* is chiefly used for artificial things like shoes. *Castaño* is used for hair and eyes: *pelo castaño*, *ojos castaños*. 'Brown skin' is *piel morena*. 'Brown earth' is *tierra paráa* or *tierra rojiza*. *Café* (no agreement) is used for 'brown' in many parts of Latin America.

- (1) if the adjective ends in a consonant or *-í* or *-ú*, by adding *-es*. *-z* is written *c* before *e*;
 (2) in all other cases, by adding *-s*.

Examples:

Singular	Plural	
<i>azteca</i>	<i>aztecas</i>	Aztec
<i>suicida</i>	<i>suicidas</i>	suicidal
<i>grande</i>	<i>grandes</i>	big/great
<i>farsante</i>	<i>farsantes</i>	fraud/'pseudo'
<i>iraní</i>	<i>iraníes</i>	Iranian
<i>hindú</i>	<i>hindúes</i>	Hindu/Indian (see 4.8.1 note iii)
<i>cortés</i>	<i>corteses</i>	courteous
<i>gris</i>	<i>grises</i>	grey
<i>feliz</i>	<i>felices</i>	happy

Notes

(i) Adjectives ending in *-í* often make their plural in *-ís* in spontaneous speech, e.g. *los iraníes* 'Iranians', although *los iraníes* is the standard written form. Some words, e.g. *maorí/maoríes* or *maorís* 'Maori' are uncertain, but at the present stage of the language, *-ies* is still generally felt to be the correct written plural ending of adjectives ending in *-í*.

(ii) If a diminutive or augmentative suffix is added to one of these adjectives, it then becomes type 1: *mayorcito/mayorcita* 'grown-up', *grandote/grandota* 'extremely large'.

(iii) *Dominante* forms a popular feminine *dominanta* 'bossy'/'domineering'. A few other popular or slang forms in *-nta* occur, e.g. *atorrantelatorranta* (Lat. Am.) 'lazy'/'loafer', but in general adjectives ending in *-nte* are not marked for gender, whereas some nouns ending in *-nte* are. See 1.2.5 and 19.4 for further discussion.

4.2.3 Type 3 adjectives (marked for neither number nor gender)

Members of this group, which also includes a number of colour adjectives discussed 4.2.4, are invariable in form, presumably because they are felt to be nouns rather than adjectives. (See also 2.1.7b for discussion of compound nouns like *perro policía* 'police dog', *hombre rana* 'frogman'):

Singular	Plural	
<i>una rata macho</i>	<i>unas ratas macho</i>	male rat(s)
<i>la camisa beige</i> (El País uses the spelling <i>beis</i>)	<i>las camisas beige</i>	beige shirt(s)

Other common members of this class are:

<i>alerta*</i>	alert	<i>estamos alerta</i>	we're alert
<i>clave*</i>	key	<i>el punto clave/los puntos clave</i>	the key issue(s)
<i>encinta</i>	(literary) pregnant	<i>tres mujeres encinta</i>	three pregnant women (Manuel Seco recommends the plural <i>encintas</i>)
<i>extra*</i>		<i>pagos extra</i>	extra payments
<i>hembra</i>	female	<i>los ratones hembra</i>	female mice
<i>esnob</i>	snobbish/trendy		
<i>modelo</i>		<i>las granjas modelo</i>	model farms
<i>monstruo</i>	monster	<i>una casa monstruo</i>	a monster/giant house
<i>sport</i>		<i>los coches sport</i>	sports cars
<i>tabú*</i>	taboo		
<i>ultra*</i>	extreme right-wing		

Notes

(i) This group is unstable, and the words asterisked often agree in the plural: *los problemas claves*, *los pagos extras*, *los temas tabúes*, *Nuestra obligación es vivir constantemente alertas* (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru) 'Our obligation is to live constantly alert . . . '.

(ii) Although they look like nouns, *maestro*, *virgen* and *perro* agree like normal adjectives: *llaves maestras* 'master keys', *tierras vírgenes* 'virgin territories', *¡Qué vida más perra!* 'What a rotten life!'

(iii) *Varón* 'male' (of humans) is type 2: *niños varones* 'male children'.

(iv) Pluralization of the adjectival word restores its full function as a noun. Compare *niños modelo* 'model children' and *niños modelos* 'child models'. See 2.1.7b for discussion.

(v) A similar phenomenon is found in French with a few adjectives, cf. *des chemises marron* 'brown shirts'.

4.2.4 Invariable adjectives of colour

The more usual adjectives denoting colours – *negro*, *rojo*, *azul* – are ordinary type 1 or type 2 adjectives. However, any suitable noun, preceded by *color*, *de color* or *color de*, can describe a colour: *ojos color (de) humo* 'smoke-coloured eyes', *color barquillo* 'wafer-coloured'. The phrase with *color* is sometimes dropped and the noun is then used like a type 3 adjective, i.e. it does not agree in number and gender: *tres botones naranja/rosa/beige/malva/violeta/esmeralda* 'three orange/pink/beige/mauve/violet/emerald buttons', *corbatas salmón* 'salmon ties', *cintas fresa* 'strawberry-colour ribbons'. Other nouns so used are:

<i>añil</i>	indigo	<i>granate</i>	garnet/dark red
<i>azafrán</i>	saffron	<i>lila</i>	lilac
<i>azur</i>	azure	<i>oro</i>	gold (<i>dorado</i> = golden)
<i>café</i>	coffee-coloured/brown	<i>paja</i>	straw-coloured
<i>carmesí</i>	crimson	<i>sepia</i>	sepia
<i>cereza</i>	cherry	<i>turquesa</i>	turquoise
<i>chocolate</i>	chocolate brown	etc.	
<i>escarlata</i>	scarlet		
<i>grana</i>	dark red (<i>Se puso como la grana</i> 'He turned deep red')		

Notes

(i) Colloquially, and in the work of some writers, especially Latin-American, *naranja*, *rosa*, *malva*, *violeta* and a few others may be pluralized: *flores malvas* 'mauve flowers', *Los jacarandaes se pusieron violetas* (E. Sábato, Argentina) 'The jacarandas turned violet', *las uñas violetas* 'violet finger-nails' (C. Barral, Spain), . . . *los ojos violetas eran de Mary* (C. Fuentes, Mexico) 'the violet eyes were Mary's'. But this seems to be avoided in careful language: . . . *sus ojos violeta parpadean* (J. Marsé, Spain) 'her violet eyes are blinking', . . . *rayos ultravioleta* (*El País*, Spain) 'ultraviolet rays', *pliegos de papel llegados de Europa, azules, malva, rosa, verdes* (F. Umbral, Spain) 'folds of paper from Europe, blue, mauve, pink, green'.

Carmesí 'crimson' is always pluralized like a regular type 2 adjective (*carmesíes*) by the Spanish writer Antonio Gala in his best-selling novel *El manuscrito carmesí* (1991). It is also pluralized in the novels of the Mexican, Luis Spota.

(ii) It is unusual to find such adjectives before a noun, except in poetry: *Como sonreía la rosa mañana* (Antonio Machado, Spain, written before 1910) 'As pink dawn was smiling'.

(iii) *Color* or *de color* is, in practice, usually inserted before such words in everyday language: *una bicicleta color naranja* 'an orange bicycle', *zapatos (de) color mostaza* 'mustard-colour shoes'.

4.3 Compound colour adjectives

All compound colour adjectives of the type 'dark blue', 'light green', 'signal red' are invariable in form:

<i>hojas verde oscuro</i>	dark green leaves
<i>calcetines rojo claro</i>	pale/light red socks
<i>una masa gris castaño</i>	a grey-brown mass
<i>[Mis ojos] son azul</i>	My eyes are pale blue,
<i>pálido como los de las</i>	like the wet-nurses'
<i>nodrizas (E. Poniatowska,</i>	
<i>Mexico)</i>	

In this respect Spanish resembles French: *des yeux bleu clair*.

Notes

(i) Well-established compound adjectives of this kind may be used on their own, but new or unusual formations may require the formula *de color . . .*, e.g. *una mancha de color rojo apagado* 'a dull red stain/patch', not ?*una mancha rojo apagado*.

(ii) There are special words for some common mixed colours: *verdirrojo* 'red-green', *verdiblanco* 'greenish white', *verdinegro* 'very dark green', *blanquiazul* 'bluish white', *blanquinegro* 'black and white', *blanquirrojo* 'red and white'. These agree like normal adjectives: *verdinegros/verdinegras*, etc.

4.4 Hirviendo and ardiendo

Gerunds cannot be used as adjectives in Spanish: one cannot say **un objeto volando* for 'a flying object' (*un objeto volante* or *un objeto que vuela/volaba*, etc.). See 20.3 for a more detailed discussion.

There are two exceptions, *hirviendo* 'boiling' and *ardiendo* 'burning' which, despite having the form of gerunds, can be used as adjective:

<i>Tráeme agua hirviendo</i>	Bring me some boiling water
<i>Tienes la frente ardiendo</i>	Your forehead is burning
<i>Yo más bien soy un carbón ardiendo</i>	I feel more like a burning coal
(i.e. sexually excited; dialogue in M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)	

Chorreando 'dripping wet' may be another exception in *Llevo la ropa chorreando* 'my clothes are dripping wet'.

Hirviendo and *ardiendo* are invariable in form, take no suffixes and cannot appear before a noun.

4.5 Adjectives formed from two words

Some compound adjectives are made into single words and behave like any adjective: *muchachas pelirrojas* 'red-haired girls' (from *pelo* 'hair' and *rojo* 'red'), *cuernos puntiagudos* 'sharp-pointed horns' (from *punta* 'point' and *agudo* 'sharp').

In compound adjectives joined by a hyphen, only the second word agrees with the noun:

<i>movimientos político-militares</i>	political-military movements
<i>teorías histórico-críticas</i>	historical-critical theories

Such examples excepted, use of a hyphen to join words is very rare in Spanish; cf. *contrarrevolucionario* 'counter-revolutionary', *latinoamericano* 'Latin-American'. See 39.4.6 for details about the use of the hyphen.

4.6 Short forms of some adjectives

A number of common adjectives lose their final syllable in certain circumstances.

(a) The singular of *grande* is shortened to *gran* before any noun: *un gran momento* 'a great moment', *una gran comida* 'a great meal'. The *-de* is occasionally retained in literary styles for purposes of emphasis or before words beginning with a vowel: *este grande héroe nacional* 'this great national hero'.

Grande is not shortened if *más* or *menos* precede: *el más grande pintor del mundo* 'the greatest painter in the world' (*el mayor pintor* is better).

(b) The following lose their final vowel when placed before a singular masculine noun or combination of adjective and masculine noun:

<i>alguno</i>	<i>algún remoto día</i>	some remote day
<i>bueno</i>	<i>un buen cocinero</i>	a good cook
<i>malo</i>	<i>un mal ingeniero</i>	a bad engineer
<i>ninguno</i>	<i>en ningún momento</i>	at no moment
<i>postrero</i>	<i>tu postrer día</i>	your last day (archaic)
<i>primero</i>	<i>mi primer gran amor</i>	my first great love
<i>tercero</i>	<i>el tercer candidato</i>	the third candidate

Notes

(i) The full form must be used if any conjunction or adverb separates the adjective from the noun or noun phrase: *esta grande pero costosa victoria* 'this great but costly victory', *un bueno aunque agrio vino* 'a good though sour wine'.

(ii) Popular speech, especially Latin-American, sometimes uses short forms of adjectives before feminine nouns as well. This usage is also occasionally seen in several good Spanish writers of the first half of the twentieth century, but it is nowadays avoided: *la primera mujer* 'the first woman', not **la primer mujer*, *buena parte de* 'a good part of', not **buen parte de*.

(iii) *Algún* and *ningún* are found in spontaneous speech before feminine nouns beginning with a stressed *a-* or *ha-*, but the full feminine forms should be used in writing. See 3.1.2, 9.4 and 23.5.5 for details.

(iv) For *cualquiera* see 9.8.

(v) *Santo* 'saint' is shortened to *San* before the names of all male saints except those beginning with *Do-* or *To-*: *san Juan*, *san Blas*, *santo Tomás*, *Santo Domingo*. It is not shortened when it means 'holy': *el santo Padre* 'the Holy Father', *todo el santo día* 'the whole day through', *el Santo Oficio* 'the Holy Office' (i.e. the Inquisition).

(vi) For the short forms of *tanto* and *cuánto* (*tan* and *cuán*) see 9.16 and 24.6.

4.7 Agreement of adjectives⁴

Some questions of number agreement of adjectives are also discussed under 2.3, particularly agreement with collective nouns (2.3.1).

For the agreement of adjectives with titles like *Alteza* 'Highness', *Excelencia* 'Excellency' see 1.2.4.

⁴ Some of the examples and arguments in this section are inspired by Judge and Healey (1983) 11.2.

4.7.1 Agreement of adjectives that follow the noun

(a) One or more masculine nouns require a masculine adjective: *un elefante asiático* 'an Asian elephant', *platos combinados* 'meals on a plate' (e.g. hamburger, vegetables, potatoes all served together, foreign-style), *cien mil pesos mexicanos*, '100,000 Mexican pesos', *Mi padre es inglés* 'My father is English'.

One or more feminine nouns require a feminine adjective: *la Grecia antigua* 'ancient Greece', *mil pesetas españolas* '1000 Spanish pesetas', *Mi madre es inglesa* 'My mother is English'.

Two or more nouns of different gender require a masculine plural adjective:

profesores y profesoras ingleses
puentes y casas decrepitos

English men and women teachers
derelict bridges and houses

(b) If several adjectives follow a plural noun and each adjective refers to only one individual item, the adjective will be singular: *los presidentes venezolano y peruano* 'the Peruvian president and the Venezuelan president'. *Los presidentes venezolanos y peruanos* means 'the presidents of Venezuela and the presidents of Peru'.

Notes

(i) Seco (1992), 112, notes the possibility of singular agreement with two or more nouns denoting a single complex idea: *talento y habilidad extremada* 'extreme talent and skill' or *talento y habilidad extremados*. In the former case the adjective agrees in gender with the last noun in the series, but plural agreement is much more usual in everyday language.

(ii) A plural adjective is occasionally given the gender of the last noun in the list even though it qualifies all the nouns: *los arbustos y las flores marchitas* 'withered bushes and flowers' – although the most obvious reading is 'bushes and withered flowers'. *Los arbustos y las flores marchitos* makes the adjective refer unambiguously to both nouns and is the normal construction.

Spanish is more tolerant than French of a masculine adjective following a feminine noun. French rejects constructions like **des hommes et des femmes gros = hombres y mujeres gordos* 'fat men and women'.

(iii) Adjectives may sometimes function as adverbs, in which case they are invariably masculine singular in form: *María habla muy claro* 'Maria speaks very clearly'. See 31.3.3 for further discussion.

4.7.2 Agreement with nouns joined by o or ni

(a) With the conjunction *o* agreement is optional. Plural agreement emphasizes the fact that the *o* is not exclusive (i.e. either one or the other or possibly both) and it indicates that the adjective refers to both nouns:

Buscaban una tienda o un restaurante abiertos (*abiertos* unambiguously refers to both)

They were looking for an open shop or (an open) restaurant

Buscaban la mujer o el hombre capaces de asumir el cargo (for the absence of personal *a* see 22.2)

They were looking for the woman or man capable of taking on the job

Singular agreement emphasizes exclusivity:

Puede venir Mario o su hermano, pero no los dos

Mario or his brother can come, but not both

(b) With *ni* 'nor' the plural is usual:

Ni Mario ni Juan eran tontos

Neither Mario nor Juan were stupid

4.7.3 Agreement with collective nouns

An adjective that modifies a collective noun is singular:

La organización de profesores se dio por vencida

The teachers' association gave up/admitted defeat

However, if words that refer to the people belonging to the collective noun intervene between the collective noun and the adjective or verb, the latter are usually in the plural. Compare *Sólo/Solo una minoría es culta* 'Only a minority are educated' and *Sólo/Solo una minoría de los empleados son cultos* 'Only a minority of the employees are educated'.

For further details on agreement with collective nouns, including *minoría*, *parte*, *resto*, *mitad* and similar words, see 2.3.1.

4.7.4 Agreement of pre-posed adjectives

When an adjective precedes two or more nouns and modifies them all, it usually agrees only with the first noun. This avoids the awkward combination of a plural adjective with a singular noun:

*con exagerada cortesía y deferencia
Henrique Ureña . . . con su habitual
sabiduría y tolerancia* (E. Sábato,
Argentina, interview)
. . . *esta creciente generalización y
abstracción de la ciencia* (ibid.)

with exaggerated courtesy and deference
Henrique Ureña, with his usual wisdom
and tolerance

this growing generalization and
abstraction of science

The plural may, however, be used to avoid severe ambiguities: *sus amados hijo y nieto* 'his beloved son and grandson' (different people, both beloved).

Note

French does not allow this construction. Compare . . . *una profunda inspiración y reflexión* and *une inspiration et une réflexion profondes* 'deep inspiration and reflection'.⁵

4.7.5 'Neuter' agreement

An adjective that refers to no noun in particular is masculine singular in form:

*Es absurdo hacerlo sin ayuda
Fantástico . . . la cantidad de dinero que
gasta en tabaco
La miseria no tiene nada de sano y
placentero* (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)

It's absurd to do it without help
Fantastic . . . the amount of money he
spends on tobacco
Extreme poverty has nothing healthy or
agreeable about it

Notes

(i) Neuter agreement is sometimes found even where a noun is present: *Tampoco es bueno demasiada natación* (L. Goytisolo, Spain, dialogue) 'Too much swimming isn't good either'. Here the adjective does not modify the noun *natación* but the idea *demasiada natación*. *Buena* would also be correct.

(ii) For adjectives with the article *lo* (*lo bueno*, *lo grande*, etc.), see 7.2.

⁵ P. Gerboin and C. Leroy (1991), 33.

4.8 Formation of adjectives of place

4.8.1 Adjectives from countries and regions

These are formed unpredictably. The following are noteworthy (for the use of the definite article with the names of countries, see 3.2.17):

<i>Alemania</i>	<i>alemán</i>	
<i>América</i>	<i>americano</i>	(often 'Latin-American'. See note i)
<i>Argelia</i>	<i>argelino</i>	Algeria, Algerian
<i>(la) Argentina</i>	<i>argentino</i>	
<i>Austria</i>	<i>austriaco</i>	
<i>Bélgica</i>	<i>belga</i>	
<i>Bolivia</i>	<i>boliviano</i>	
<i>(el) Brasil</i>	<i>brasileño</i>	
<i>(el) Canadá</i>	<i>canadiense</i>	
<i>Canarias</i>	<i>canario</i>	
<i>Castilla</i>	<i>castellano</i>	Castile/Castilian. (See note ii)
<i>Cataluña</i>	<i>catalán</i>	
<i>Chile</i>	<i>chileno</i>	
<i>(la) China</i>	<i>chino</i>	
<i>Colombia</i>	<i>colombiano</i>	
<i>Costa Rica</i>	<i>costarricense, costarricense</i>	
<i>Dinamarca</i>	<i>danés</i>	Danish
<i>Ecuador</i>	<i>ecuatoriano</i>	
<i>Egipto</i>	<i>egipcio</i> (not * <i>egipciano</i>)	
<i>Escocia</i>	<i>escocés</i>	Scottish
<i>Estados Unidos</i>	<i>estadounidense</i>	(rare in speech. See note (i))
<i>Europa</i>	<i>européa</i>	
<i>Francia</i>	<i>francés</i>	
<i>Gales</i>	<i>galés</i>	Wales/Welsh
<i>Galicia</i>	<i>gallego</i>	
<i>Gibraltar</i>	<i>gibraltaresa</i>	
<i>Grecia</i>	<i>griego</i>	
<i>Guatemala</i>	<i>guatemalteco</i>	
<i>Holanda</i>	<i>holandés</i>	
<i>Honduras</i>	<i>hondureño</i>	
<i>Hungría</i>	<i>húngaro</i>	
<i>Inglaterra</i>	<i>inglés</i>	(often used for 'British')
<i>Irlanda</i>	<i>irlandés</i>	
<i>(el) Japón</i>	<i>japonés</i>	
<i>la India</i>	<i>indio</i>	(see note iii for <i>hindú</i>)
<i>Marruecos</i>	<i>marroquí</i>	Moroccan
<i>Méjico/México</i>	<i>mejicano/mexicano</i>	(see note iv)
<i>Nicaragua</i>	<i>nicaragüense</i>	
<i>Panamá</i>	<i>panameño</i>	
<i>(el) Paraguay</i>	<i>paraguayo</i>	
<i>(el) Perú</i>	<i>peruano</i>	
<i>Polonia</i>	<i>polaco</i>	Polish
<i>Portugal</i>	<i>portugués</i>	
<i>Puerto Rico</i>	<i>puertorriqueño/ portorriqueño</i>	(the former is used on the island and is spreading)
<i>El Salvador</i>	<i>salvadoreño</i>	
<i>Rusia</i>	<i>ruso</i>	
<i>Suecia</i>	<i>sueco</i>	Swedish
<i>Suiza</i>	<i>suizo</i>	
<i>(el) Uruguay</i>	<i>uruguayo</i>	

Vascongadas (País Vasco)	vasco
Venezuela	venezolano

Notes

(i) The adjective from *América Latina* or *Latinoamérica* is *latinoamericano*. Spanish-speaking Latin-Americans dislike terms like *hispanoamericano* or 'Spanish-American' for the same reason that US citizens would not like to be called 'British Americans'. However, *Latinoamérica* includes countries where other Latin-based languages are spoken – e.g. Brazil, Haiti, Martinique, French Guyana – so 'Latin-American' is linguistically misleading.

In Latin America *norteamericano* is taken to mean our 'American' and is more common than *estadounidense*, which is rarely used in spoken Spanish. *Americano* is assumed to mean *latinoamericano*, although in Spain it means the same as our 'American'.

The adjective from *América del sur* or *Sudamérica* 'South America' – which does not include Central America, Mexico or the Caribbean – is *sudamericano*. The form *suramericano* is rejected by the style-book of *El País* and is generally considered incorrect in Spain, but it and similar forms, e.g. *Suráfrica*, *suroeste* 'South-West', *sureste* 'South-East' are common in Latin America. Standard Peninsular usage prefers *sud-* in all of these, though *sur-* is increasingly common.

For agreement with *Estados Unidos*, see 3.2.17.

(ii) *Castellano* is the Castilian language, i.e. the language described in this book, strictly speaking the dialect of Castile, which came to be the dominant literary language of Spain. *El castellano* now means the same as *el español*, 'the Spanish language'. However *el español* has political overtones for autonomists, and now that Spain has several official languages, Catalans, Basques and Galicians sometimes object to *el castellano* being called *el español*. The same objection is also heard from some Latin-Americans.

(iii) In Latin America the word *indio* is always assumed to mean 'Amerindian', so *hindú* is normally used there – but not in Spain – for Asian Indian, despite the fact that it properly means the Hindu religion: *los empleados hindús del raj británico*⁶ (C. Fuentes, dialogue, Mexico), 'the Indian employees under the British Raj'.

In Spain, *indiano* used to denote a 'colonial' who had made a fortune in Latin America and returned home.

(iv) Mexicans always spell the words *México/mexicano*, even though they are pronounced *Méjico*, *mejicano*. The spelling with *x* honours the memory of the Mexica or Aztecs, as their neighbours called them. *El País* (Spain) always prints *México*, *mexicano*, but Manuel Seco objects on the grounds that it encourages Spanish news-readers to pronounce them [méksiko], [meksikáno].

A few other Mexican place names are similarly affected, e.g. Oaxaca, Xalapa (or Jalapa). See 39.1.3 for further remarks on the pronunciation of *x*.

(v) *Árabe* means 'Arab' or 'Arabic'.

4.8.2 Adjectives from towns

There is no general rule for deriving adjectives from the names of towns, and some places pride themselves on obscure forms, e.g. *Huelva* – *onubense*.

Some of the more common are:

Álava	alavés	
Alcalá	complutense	(used of the ancient university of Alcalá, now in Madrid)
Ávila	abulense	
Badajoz	pacense	

⁶ *Hindús*, colloquial for *hindúes*. See 2.1.3c.

Barcelona	barcelonés	
Bilbao	bilbaíno	
Bogotá	bogotano	
Buenos Aires	porteño	
Burgos	burgalés	
Cádiz	gaditano	
Caracas	caraqueño	
Córdoba	cordobés	
La Coruña	coruñés	
Florencia	florentino	
Granada	granadino	
La Habana	habanero	
Lima	limeño	
Londres	londinense	(note spelling)
Lugo	lucense	
Madrid	madriileño	
Málaga	malagueño	
Moscú	moscovita	
Murcia	murciano	
Nápoles	napolitano	
Nueva York	neoyorquino	
Oviedo	ovetense	
Pamplona	pamplonés/pamplonica	
París	parisiense	(El País censures the use of <i>parisién</i> and <i>parisino</i>)
La Paz	paceño/pacense	
Quito	quiteño	
Río de Janeiro	carioca	(after a local Indian tribe)
Roma	romano	
Salamanca	salmantino/salamanqués	
San Sebastián	donostiarra	(a Basque word)
Santander	santanderino	
Santiago	santiaguino (Chile)	
	santiagués (Spain)	
Sevilla	sevillano	
Toledo	toledano	
Valencia	valenciano	
Valladolid	vallisoletano	
Zaragoza	zaragozano	

4.9 Intensive forms of the adjective

4.9.1 The suffix *-ísimo*: meaning and formation

The suffix *-ísimo* can be added to many adjectives. It intensifies the original meaning – *Ana es riquísima* ‘Ana is extremely rich’ (from *rico*) – and should be used sparingly. It cannot be added to all adjectives, and there are irregularities.

This suffix is sometimes misnamed a ‘superlative’ suffix, but it cannot be used in comparisons and is best thought of simply as an intensifier.

-ísimo is added after removing any final vowel: *grande/grandísimo*, *guapa/guapísima*.

(a) Adjectives ending *-col/-ca* and *-gol/-ga* require spelling changes to keep the hard sound of the *c* or *g*: *rico/riquísimo* ‘rich’, *vago/vaguísimo* ‘vague’/‘lazy’.

(b) Adjectives ending in *-z* change the *z* to *c*: *feliz/felicitísimo* 'happy', *feroz/ferocísimo* 'ferocious'.

(c) For adjectives ending in two vowels, see 4.9.2.

(d) Adjectives ending in *-ble* change this ending to *-bil*: *amable/amabilísimo* 'friendly', *posible/posibilísimo*. *Endeble/endebilísimo* 'feeble' is a rare exception.

4.9.2 Adjectives which do not take *-ísimo*

The following adjectives do not take the suffix *-ísimo*:

(a) Those ending in *-í*, *-uo*, *-io*, or *-eo* if not stressed on the *e*: e.g. *baladí* 'trivial', *arduo* 'arduous', *espontáneo* 'spontaneous', *rubio* 'blond', *tardío* 'late'.

Exceptions: *agrio/agrisísimo* 'sour', *amplio/amplísimo* 'wide'/'extensive', *frío/fruísimo* 'cold', *limpio/limpísimo* 'clean', *ordinario/ordinarísimo* 'ordinary'/'vulgar', *pío/piísimo* 'pious', *sucio/sucísimo* 'dirty', *vacío/vacísimo* 'empty'.

(b) Words stressed on the antepenultimate syllable (*esdrújulas*) ending in *-ico*, *-fero*, *-geno*, *-voro*: *político* 'political', *mamífero* 'mammal(ian)', *homogéneo* 'homogeneous', *carnívoro* 'carnivorous'.

(c) Augmentatives, diminutives and comparatives: *preguntón* 'inquisitive', *bonito* 'pretty', *grandote* 'enormous', *menor* 'smaller'/'younger'.

Note

Mayorcísimo 'very old' is often heard, e.g. *Es mayorcísimo* 'He's very old'.

(d) Compound adjectives, e.g. *patizambo* 'knock-kneed', *ojituerto* 'one-eyed'.

(e) Many adjectives of more than three syllables ending in *-ble*: *inexplicable*, *incontestable* 'unquestionable', *desmontable* 'collapsible'. There are exceptions, though some are uncommon: *agradable/agradabilísimo* 'agreeable', *apacible/apacibilísimo*, 'mild', *miserable/miserabilísimo* 'wretched', *venerable/venerabilísimo* 'venerable'.

(f) Those whose meaning cannot be further intensified: *fantástico*, *ideal*, *infinito*, *inmortal* 'immortal', *total*, etc.

Exceptions: *mismo/mismísimo* 'very' (*la mismísima persona* 'the very same person'), *singular/singularísimo*.

(g) Time and number adjectives: *anual* 'annual', *diario* 'daily', *nocturno* 'night-time', *semanal* 'weekly', *quinto* 'fifth', *último* 'last', *vigésimo* 'twentieth', etc.

Exception: *primer/primerísimo* 'first'/'very first of all'.

(h) *Hirviendo* 'boiling' and *ardiendo* 'burning'.

(i) Technical and scientific adjectives and most adjectives ending in *-ista*, e.g. *decimal*, *termonuclear* 'thermo-nuclear', *transformacional* 'transformational', *comunista* 'Communist', *nacionalista* 'nationalist', etc.

4.9.3 Irregular intensive forms

(a) The following are best learnt as separate words:

<i>antiquísimo</i>	(from <i>antiguo</i>)	ancient
<i>cursilísimo</i>	(from <i>cursi</i>)	affected/pseudo-refined
<i>infimo</i>	(from <i>inferior</i>)	inferior/least/lowest (literary)
<i>jovencísimo</i>	(from <i>joven</i>)	young
<i>máximo</i>	(from <i>mayor</i>)	supreme/greatest
<i>mínimo</i>	(from <i>menor</i>)	slightest/least
<i>óptimo</i>	(from <i>mejor</i>)	superb (literary)
<i>pésimo</i>	(from <i>peor</i>)	bad/dreadful
<i>supremo</i>	(from <i>superior</i>)	superior/supreme

(b) The following forms are occasionally found in older texts and or in flowery written styles:

		Literary form	Current form
<i>amigo</i>	friendly/keen	<i>amicísimo</i>	<i>amiguísimo</i>
<i>áspero</i>	harsh	<i>asperrimo</i>	<i>asperísimo</i>
<i>benévolo</i>	charitable/benevolent	<i>benevolentísimo</i>	not used
<i>célebre</i>	famous	<i>celebérrimo</i>	not used
<i>cruel</i>	cruel	<i>crudelísimo</i>	<i>cruelísimo</i>
<i>difícil</i>	difficult	<i>difícilimo</i>	<i>difícilísimo</i>
<i>fácil</i>	easy	<i>facílmo</i>	<i>facilísimo</i>
<i>fiel</i>	faithful	<i>fielísimo</i>	<i>fielísimo</i>
<i>frío</i>	cold	<i>frigidísimo</i>	<i>fruísmo</i>
<i>íntegro</i>	whole/entire	<i>integérrimo</i>	<i>integrísimo</i>
<i>libre</i>	free	<i>libérrimo</i>	<i>librísimo</i> (familiar)
<i>magnífice</i>	magnificent	<i>magnificentísimo</i>	not used
<i>mísero</i>	wretched (archaic)	<i>misérrimo</i>	not used?
<i>munífice</i>	munificent	<i>munificentísimo</i>	not used
<i>pobre</i>	poor	<i>paupérrimo</i>	<i>pobrísimo</i>
<i>sabio</i>	wise	<i>sapientísimo</i>	not used
<i>sagrado</i>	sacred	<i>sacratísimo</i>	not used

(c) The old rule whereby the diphthongs *ue* and *ie* are simplified to *o* or *e* when *-ísimo* is added, is nowadays usually ignored although *novísimo* 'very recent' must be distinguished from *nuevísimo* 'very new':

<i>bueno</i>	<i>buenísimo</i>	(<i>bonísimo</i>)	good
<i>cierto</i>	<i>ciertísimo</i>	(<i>certísimo</i>)	certain
<i>fuerte</i>	<i>fuertísimo</i>	(<i>fortísimo</i>)	strong
<i>reciente</i>	<i>recientísimo</i>	(<i>recentísimo</i>)	recent
<i>tierno</i>	<i>tiernísimo</i>	(<i>ternísimo</i>)	tender

Some words never suffered modification: *viejo/viejísimo* 'old', *cuerdol/cuerdísimo* 'sane', etc.

4.10 Use of nouns as adjectives

Nouns may occasionally be used adjectivally, although this construction is not particularly common in written language:

<i>Tienes que ser más persona decente</i>	You've got to be more of a decent person
<i>Este libro es menos novela que el otro</i>	This book is less of a novel than the other
<i>Es más bailarina que actriz</i>	She's more (of) a dancer than an actress
<i>Su reacción es puro teatro</i>	His reaction is pure theatre

Such nouns do not agree in number or gender with the word they modify, and when they are modified by words like *más*, *menos*, *tan* they are not accompanied by a definite or indefinite article.

4.11 Position of adjectives in relation to nouns

4.11.1 General

For the position of *alguno*, *ninguno*, *cualquiera*, *mismo*, see 9.4.1a, 23.5.5, 9.8a and 9.11 respectively. For the position of ordinal numerals see 10.12.3.

It is hardly true to say that the adjective 'normally' follows the noun in Spanish. Adjective position is much more flexible than in English and a

good deal more flexible than in French, but the underlying rules are difficult to formulate. Many factors of convention, sound and above all style and meaning combine to determine whether, for example, one says *un lejano ruido* or *un ruido lejano* 'a distant noise'. Moreover there seem to be as yet unresearched differences between Peninsular and American-Spanish, the latter apparently allowing some pre-posed constructions unacceptable in Spain. The basic rule seems to be:

(a) Restrictive adjectives follow the noun.

(b) Non-restrictive adjectives may precede or follow the noun. Some always precede the noun.

Restrictive adjectives narrow the scope of the noun that precedes them: *vino espumoso* 'sparkling wine' denotes a restricted type of wine; *Odio las novelas históricas* 'I hate historical novels' refers only to those novels which are historical.

Non-restrictive adjectives typically refer to the whole of the entity denoted by the noun: *las aburridas conferencias del decano* 'the dean's boring lectures', *la poco apetitosa cocina británica* 'unappetizing British cooking' are both generalizations that attribute a quality to every member or aspect of the class of things denoted by the noun.

Unfortunately, the distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive adjectives is not always clear, and the decision about where to put the adjective often relies on a feel for the language rare among non-natives.

As a useful, though not absolutely fool-proof guide to whether an adjective is restrictive, native speakers of English may apply the following test:

If an English adjective sounds correct when spoken with a heavy stress (or, more accurately, with falling intonation) – 'I don't like **sour** apples, but I do like **sweet** apples' – then it is almost certainly restrictive, and its Spanish equivalent will follow the noun: *No me gustan las manzanas **agrias**, pero sí me gustan las manzanas **dulces***.

If an English adjective sounds wrong when stressed, it is probably non-restrictive and its Spanish counterpart may well precede the noun. Thus if one stresses 'beautiful' in 'the beautiful sun of Spain', the phrase suggests that there is another Spanish sun that is not beautiful; the absurdity of this strongly suggests that the Spanish adjective precedes the noun: *el hermoso sol de España*.

4.11.2 Examples of restrictive (post-posed) adjectives

The following adjectives are restrictive and therefore always follow the noun:

(a) Those that create a new type or sub-set of the thing described by the noun:

<i>el pan integral</i>	wholemeal bread
<i>el papel secante</i>	blotting paper
<i>los cazas computerizados</i>	computerized fighter aircraft
<i>la tracción delantera</i>	front-wheel drive

All the other examples in this section are in fact instances of this type of adjective, which can be thought of as a transformed clause: *la poesía romántica*

= *aquella poesía que es romántica, las manzanas verdes* = *aquellas manzanas que están verdes*.

(b) Those used for purposes of contrast, whether explicit or implied:

<i>Tráigame una espumadera limpia, no una sucia</i>	Bring me a clean ladle, not a dirty one
<i>Tengo un boli verde y otro azul</i>	I have a green ball-point pen and a blue one
<i>Adoro los ojos azules</i>	I adore blue eyes

(c) Scientific or technical adjectives used to define or specify a noun (as is almost always the case):

<i>la gramática transformativa</i>	transformational grammar
<i>la crítica estructuralista</i>	structuralist criticism
<i>el laboratorio lingüístico</i>	language laboratory

Only the most far-fetched styles would use such adjectives poetically or as epithets, though some, e.g. *unilateral*, *microscópico*, (*p*)*sicoanalítico*, *materialista*, might conceivably be used as value judgements (see 4.11.4a).

(d) Attributive adjectives. These express the origin, substance, contents or purpose of a noun. Their use is discussed at 4.12.

<i>la nave espacial</i>	space ship
<i>el túnel ferroviario</i>	railway tunnel
<i>la guerra nuclear</i>	nuclear war
<i>el material bélico (= material de guerra)</i>	war matériel

(e) Adjectives of nationality, which are almost always restrictive:

<i>el clima argentino</i>	the Argentine climate
<i>la paella valenciana</i>	paella Valencia-style
<i>los monumentos mayas</i>	the Mayan monuments

Note

Adjectives of nationality may occasionally be used as epithets (because they express allegedly typical qualities. See 4.11.4 for a discussion of epithets): *Mi española impulsividad me hace escribir estas líneas* (reader's letter in *Cambio16*, Spain) 'My Spanish impulsiveness makes me write these lines', *su británica reserva* 'her/his British reserve'.

(f) With *tener* + *el/la/los/las* followed by a noun denoting a part of the body:

<i>Tiene las manos largas</i>	She has long hands
<i>Tiene el pelo rizado</i>	He's got curly hair

4.11.3 Pre-posed (non-restrictive) adjectives indicating impression, reaction, subjective evaluation

The most common reason for putting an adjective before the noun is to emphasize its emotional or subjective content, e.g. *una tremenda tragedia* 'a tremendous tragedy', *un gran poeta* 'a great poet', *el inquietante problema del efecto invernadero* 'the worrying problem of the greenhouse effect'. These adjectives are non-restrictive because the speaker wishes to eliminate from the utterance any reference to another tragedy, poet or problem; no comparison or contrast with other nouns is suggested.

Such adjectives may describe the speaker's impression, assessment or evaluation of a thing, or its appearance. They can include a vast range of

adjectives indicating shape, distance, size, colour, texture, passage of time, praise, blame or subjective appraisal of any kind.

Since the use of such pre-posed adjectives conveys an emotional message, the decision whether to put such adjectives in front of a noun often depends on stylistic and other subjective factors. Literary, solemn or poetic styles, journalism and advertising particularly favour pre-posed adjectives:

<i>las magníficas ruinas de Machu Picchu</i>	the magnificent ruins at Macchu Picchu
<i>un profesor de historia del arte, dueño de una amplísima cultura</i> (S. Pitól, Mexico, dialogue)	a lecturer (US 'professor') in Art History, a highly-educated man
<i>¡Sensacional oferta de verano!</i>	Sensational Summer Offer!

Sometimes the difference between post-posed and pre-posed adjectives can be significant, as in *el poético lenguaje de Lorca* 'the poetic language of Lorca' (aesthetic judgement) and *el lenguaje poético de Lorca* 'the language of Lorca's poetry' (factual), or *las decimonónicas actitudes del ministro* 'the nineteenth-century attitudes of the minister' (value judgement) and *la novela decimonónica* 'the nineteenth-century novel' (factual).

But very often the difference is merely stylistic, a pre-posed adjective being more literary, poetic or dramatic, a post-posed one more matter-of-fact. The following examples will help to train the ear; in every case the adjective could have followed the noun or noun-phrase:

<i>el casi olvidado nombre de James MacPherson</i> (J.L. Borges, Argentina)	the almost forgotten name of James MacPherson
<i>Además, en el mar hay barcos anclados en permanente contacto con los aviones nocturnos</i> (G. García Márquez, Colombia, dialogue)	Moreover, there are boats anchored at sea in permanent contact with the night aircraft
<i>la ciudad donde, en el anterior siglo, se habían casado Bécquer y Casta Esteban</i>	the city where, in the previous century, Bécquer and Casta Esteban had married
<i>La revolución significó para mí una justa redistribución de la riqueza</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Perú)	The revolution meant for me a just redistribution of wealth
<i>una guirnalda de blancas flores</i> (L. Goytisolo, Spain)	a wreath of white flowers
<i>La pera es de fácil digestión</i> (cookery book, Spain)	Pears are easily digested
<i>el creciente costo de la tierra urbana</i>	the rising cost of land within the cities

Notes

(i) Adjective position is arbitrarily fixed in many set phrases: *Alto Egipto* 'Upper Egypt', *el Sumo Pontífice* 'the Pope', *Baja California* 'Lower California' (cf. *América Central*, *los Estados Unidos*, *la China Popular*, 'People's China', etc.), *altos hornos* 'blast furnaces', *en alta mar* 'on the high seas', *Dios Todopoderoso* 'Almighty God', *sentido común* 'common sense', *gramática parda* 'smartness'/'cunning', etc.

(ii) If an adjective is qualified by an adverb it usually follows the noun in ordinary styles: *esta noticia altamente reveladora* 'this highly revealing news item', *una chica frigidamente agresiva*, 'a frigidly aggressive girl', *con tres amigos igualmente roñosos* 'with three equally mean friends'. Compare: *Anuncian una útil linterna* (not *linterna útil*) 'They are advertising a useful torch' and *Anuncian una linterna muy útil* 'They are advertising a very useful torch'.

With *más* and *menos* either position is possible: *el más popular presentador de la TV italiana* (*Cambio16*, Spain) 'the most popular presenter on Italian TV', or *el presentador más popular de la TV*.

Constructions like *la altamente reveladora noticia* 'the highly revealing news item', *la siempre inquieta juventud* 'ever-restless youth', *las ya de por sí interesantes confesiones del autor* 'the in themselves interesting confessions of the author', are however, found in literary style and can be explained in terms of contrast between restrictive and non-restrictive adjectives.

(iii) Nouns with two or more adjectives: the restrictive adjective follows, the non-restrictive (i.e. least important) normally precedes: *los blancos ejércitos angélicos* 'the white armies of the angels', *una elegante camisa blanca* 'an elegant white shirt', *una siniestra cruz gamada* 'a sinister swastika', *una enorme cúpula blanca* 'an enormous white dome'.

4.11.4 Other uses of pre-posed non-restrictive adjectives

The following types of non-restrictive adjectives are also pre-posed:

(a) Epithets, i.e. adjectives used to describe qualities typically associated with the noun. These are infrequent in everyday or scientific or technical language, except in set phrases. They are very common in literary, poetic or other types of emotive or affective language:

<i>mi distinguido colega</i>	my distinguished colleague
<i>el peligroso tigre asiático</i>	the dangerous Asian tiger
<i>un valiente torero</i>	a brave bull-fighter
<i>los volubles dioses romanos</i>	the fickle Roman gods

Epithets describe predictable or typical qualities: one can say *un enorme elefante* 'an enormous elephant' but only *un elefante cojo* 'a lame elephant' since lameness is not typical of elephants, *mi leal amigo* 'my loyal friend' but only *mi amigo vegetariano* 'my vegetarian friend', *un difícil problema* or *un problema difícil* 'a difficult problem', but only *un problema (p)siológico*, since problems are not typically psychological.

(b) Adjectives that unambiguously refer to every one of the items denoted by a plural noun: *Tuvo que parar en boxes para cambiar sus deterioradas ruedas* (*El País*) 'He had to stop in the pits to change his worn tyres' (*ruedas deterioradas* might imply that only some of his tyres were worn):

<i>muchas gracias por las magníficas rosas</i> (<i>rosas magníficas</i> allows the possibility that some of the roses were not magnificent)	many thanks for the magnificent roses
<i>las simpáticas peticiones de nuestros oyentes</i>	our listeners' kind requests

For this reason, adjectives applied to unique entities are likely to be pre-posed, unless they apply only to an aspect or part of the thing:

<i>Desde nuestro campamento se veía el imponente Everest</i>	one could see imposing mount Everest from our camp
<i>El izquierdista Frente Farabundo Martí</i>	the left-wing Farabundo Martí Front

but

<i>Existe un Unamuno político y comprometido, y otro contemplativo</i>	There is a political, committed Unamuno, and another contemplative one
<i>También visitamos la ciudad moderna</i>	We also visited the modern (part of the) city

(c) Intensifiers, hyperboles and swearwords – which are extreme examples of adjectives used emotively and often stripped of all real meaning. If they are post-posed, they often recover their literal meaning:

mi negra suerte
¡esta maldita máquina de escribir!
Valiente soldado eres tú
tu dichosa familia
estas condenadas hormigas

my rotten luck
 this damned typewriter!
 A great soldier you are (I don't think . . .)
 your blessed family
 these damned ants

4.11.5 Position of adjectives with compound nouns

Choice of position here depends on whether the noun phrase is felt to be a compound word (i.e. a new idea) or merely a loose conjunction of words. Thus *las flores de España* 'the flowers of Spain' is not a compound, so one says *las flores silvestres de España* 'the wild flowers of Spain' not **las flores de España silvestres*. But *una casa de muñecas* 'a dolls' house' is a compound and is therefore inseparable: *una casa de muñecas barata* 'a cheap dolls' house', not **una casa barata de muñecas*. Only long familiarity with the language will provide a certain guide to what is or is not a compound noun.

Some noun phrases are uncertain: one can say *una bicicleta amarilla de hombre* or *una bicicleta de hombre amarilla* 'a yellow man's bicycle' (the Spanish is unambiguous!). Further examples:

un cochecito de niño verde
un médico de cabecera simpático

a green pram/baby carriage
 a nice family doctor

4.11.6 Position of *bueno, malo, grande, pequeño*

The general rule applies: when they are clearly restrictive, they follow the noun. When used restrictively, they usually indicate objective qualities. When they precede the noun they usually express a subjective evaluation (which is usually the case, but see note (iv) for the special case of *pequeño*).

(a) Objective qualities:

Tengo un abrigo bueno para los fines de semana, y uno regular para los laborables
Deme un melón bueno (objective, i.e. one that's not bad)

I've got a good coat for weekends, and a so-so one for weekdays
 Give me a good melon

Oscar Wilde dijo que no hay libros buenos o malos sino libros bien o mal escritos
 (J.L. Borges, Argentina, contrast)
Trae la llave grande
Era un hombre grande
mi hermana mayor/menor

Oscar Wilde said there are no good or bad books, only well or badly written books
 Bring the big key/spanner
 He was a big man
 my elder/younger sister

(b) Subjective qualities:

un buen carpintero
un buen vino tinto
un gran éxito
un gran ruido/poeta/embustero
los grandes narcotraficantes
un pequeño problema (see note iv)
No hubo mayores problemas
el mayor poeta mexicano
ni la menor impresión de insinceridad

a good carpenter
 a good red wine
 a great success
 a great noise/poet/liar
 the major drug dealers
 a slight problem
 There were no major problems
 the greatest Mexican poet
 not even the slightest impression of insincerity

Notes

(i) With *hombre* and *mujer*, *bueno* tends to mean 'good' after the noun and 'harmless' before: *un buen hombre* means 'a harmless/simple man'. *Malo* is weaker before the noun. *Mala mujer* may be a euphemism for prostitute.

(ii) There are many set expressions: *Lo hizo de buena gana* 'He did it willingly', *oro de buena ley* 'pure gold', *En buen lío te has metido* 'You're in a fine mess', *A mí siempre me pone buena cara* 'He always makes an effort to be nice to me', *¡Qué mala pata!* 'What bad luck!', etc.

(iii) *Grande* is pre-posed when it means 'great', but it may mean 'big' in either position.

(iv) *Un pequeño problema* is normal since 'problem' is an abstract noun. However, *?una pequeña casa* is not usual for 'a little house', which is *una casita*. For discussion of this phenomenon see 38.2.

4.11.7 Position of *nuevo* and *viejo*

The usual explanation is that these are pre-posed when they mean 'another' and 'previous'/'long-standing' respectively, but in practice it is doubtful whether the distinction is always clear-cut: *Tenemos un nuevo presidente/un presidente nuevo* 'We've got a new president', *nuevos progresos técnicos* 'new (i.e. more) technological developments', *un viejo amigo* 'an old friend' (i.e. long-standing, not necessarily old in years).

Nuevo is usually post-posed when it means 'brand-new', as is *viejo* when it means 'not new': *un coche nuevo* 'a brand-new car', *un coche viejo* 'an old car'. *Viejo* may be pre-posed when it means 'not young': *un viejo americano* 'an old American'. This distinction is overridden for purposes of contrast: *Prefiero el coche nuevo al viejo* 'I prefer our new (i.e. 'latest') car to the old (i.e. 'previous') one'.

4.11.8 Adjectives whose meaning varies according to position

The following are some common examples of changes of meaning determined by adjective position, but in many cases the distinction is not rigid and a good dictionary should be consulted for further information:

	After noun	Before noun
<i>alto</i>	tall	high/top (<i>un alto funcionario</i> top civil servant/government official)
<i>antiguo</i>	ancient	former or ancient
<i>cierto</i>	certain	certain (= sure)
(<i>en ciertos trenes</i>	on certain trains)	
<i>medio</i>	average	half
<i>pobre</i>	poor (= not rich)	miserable/wretched
<i>puro</i>	pure/clean	sheer
<i>raro</i>	strange/rare	rare
<i>rico</i>	rich	delicious
<i>simple</i>	simple-minded	simple (= mere)
<i>triste</i>	sad	wretched
<i>valiente</i>	courageous	great (ironic)
<i>varios</i>	assorted/various	several

For *mismo* see 9.11, *propio* 9.14, *solo/sólo* 9.15.

4.11.9 Adjectives that occur only in front of the noun

The following phrases contain adjectives that normally occur only in front of a noun:

<i>Lo haré en ambos casos</i>	I'll do it in both cases
<i>las llamadas democracias</i>	the so-called 'democracies'
<i>la mera mención del asunto</i>	the mere mention of the topic
<i>Llevaba mucho dinero</i>	He was carrying a lot of money
<i>Busquemos otro médico</i>	Let's look for another doctor

Me dejó en **pleno** centro
 el **presunto** culpable
 poca **paciencia**
 el **pretendido** autor
 un **sedicente** budista
 Trajeron **sendos** paquetes (literary)
 ante **tamaña** tontería

No puedo comer **tanta** cantidad

He left me right in the town centre
 the allegedly guilty person
 little patience
 the alleged/supposed author
 a self-styled Buddhist
 They brought a parcel each
 in the face of such a great act of
 stupidity
 I can't eat such a quantity

4.12 Attributive adjectives

Spanish readily forms attributive adjectives from nouns, cf. *mañana-matinal* (la televisión matinal 'breakfast TV'), *impuesto-impositivo* (política impositiva 'taxation policy'). These adjectives usually replace *de* plus a noun in compound nouns of the type *la vida de familia* = *la vida familiar* 'family life'.

Many new attributive adjectives have been coined in recent decades, perhaps because the result has a pleasing brevity or a satisfying technical ring. Many of them are rejected as jargon or journalese by careful speakers, and many have not found their way into dictionaries or speech.

There is no fixed rule for forming such adjectives from nouns, and Latin-American coinages may differ from Peninsular inventions. In a few cases, e.g. *viento* > *eólico* 'wind' (la energía eólica 'wind energy'), the adjective is derived from a completely different root. The following are taken from various printed sources, mostly journalistic:

de + noun	Attributive adjective	
<i>problemas de presupuesto</i>	<i>problemas prepuestarios</i> (Lat. Am. <i>presupuestales</i>)	budget problems
<i>estancia en la cárcel</i>	<i>estancia carcelaria</i>	prison term
<i>carestía de petróleo</i>	<i>carestía petrolera</i>	high oil prices
<i>programa de televisión</i>	<i>programa televisivo</i>	television programme
<i>medios de masas</i>	<i>medios masivos</i>	mass media
<i>política de energía</i>	<i>política energética</i>	energy policy
<i>programa de informaciones</i>	<i>programa informativo</i>	information programme
<i>proceso de autonomía</i>	<i>proceso autonómico</i>	process of development towards autonomy
<i>industria de automóviles</i>	<i>industria automovilística</i>	car industry
<i>crisis de la banca</i>	<i>crisis bancaria</i>	bank crisis
<i>esfuerzo de defensa</i>	<i>esfuerzo defensivo</i>	defence/(US) defense effort
<i>defectos del oído</i>	<i>defectos auditivos</i>	hearing defects
<i>industria de hoteles</i>	<i>industria hotelera</i>	hotel industry
<i>sindicato de pilotos</i>	<i>sindicato piloteril</i>	pilots' union
etc.		

Note

In both languages an adjective may be descriptive or attributive according to context: compare 'theatrical equipment' (attributive) and 'theatrical behaviour' (descriptive). Such pairs seem to be more common in Spanish and this may confuse English-speakers, who tend to misinterpret a phrase like *calidad constructiva* as meaning 'constructive quality' when it in fact means 'quality of construction'. Further examples: *lenguaje shakespeariano* 'Shakespearean language'/'the language of Shakespeare', *una cantidad masiva* 'a massive quantity', *los medios masivos* 'the mass media', *literatura fantástica* 'fantastic literature'/'literature of fantasy', *política defensiva*

'defence (US 'defense') policy', *actitud defensiva* 'defensive attitude', *poesía amorosa* 'love poetry', *una sonrisa amorosa* 'a loving smile'.

4.13 Translating the English prefix 'un-'

The Spanish prefix *in-* is much less common than the English 'un-' and English speakers should resist the temptation to invent imaginary words like **ineconómico* from 'uneconomical' (*poco económico*). The two languages often coincide:

<i>inimaginable</i>	unimaginable	<i>intocable</i>	untouchable
<i>insobornable</i>	unbribeable	<i>irreal</i>	unreal
		etc.	

but often a solution with *poco*, *no* or *sin* must be found:

<i>poco profesional</i>	unprofessional	<i>no usado</i>	unused
<i>poco caritativo</i>	uncharitable	<i>no autorizado/</i>	unauthorized
<i>poco atractivo</i>	unattractive	<i>sin autorizar</i>	
<i>poco apetitoso</i>	unappetizing	<i>sin principios</i>	unprincipled
<i>poco amistoso</i>	unfriendly	<i>sin probar</i>	untried
<i>poco favorable</i>	unfavourable	<i>sin comprender</i>	uncomprehending
<i>poco práctico</i>	impractical (not * <i>impráctico</i>)	<i>sin convencer</i>	unconvinced
		etc.	
<i>poco inteligente</i>	unintelligent		

The above list shows that *poco*, like the French *peu*, negates an adjective: *poco deseable* means 'undesirable', not 'a little desirable'. A preceding indefinite article restores the meaning 'little': *un poco cansado* 'a little tired'/'rather tired'.

5

Comparison of adjectives and adverbs

Comparison in Spanish is not particularly complex, but English-speaking students are often hindered by interference from French, which encourages misuse of the article in the superlative and failure to use *tanto como* 'as . . . as' in comparisons of equality (cf. French *aussi . . . que*). Foreigners also tend to overlook the difference between *más de* and *más que* and often fail to use *del que* or *de lo que* before clauses, verb phrases or neuter adjectives.

5.1 Regular comparison

With the exception of the six adjectives and adverbs listed at 5.2, all adjectives and adverbs form the comparative with *más . . . que* 'more . . . than' or *menos . . . que* 'less . . . than':

Los limones son más agrios que las cerezas
Tú andas más despacio que yo
Tiene un traje menos/más formal

Lemons are more bitter than cherries
You walk slower/more slowly than me
He's got a less/more formal suit

Notes

(i) For the difference between *más/menos que* and *más/menos de* see 5.5.

(ii) Before clauses, verb phrases and 'neuter' adjectives and participles, *más/menos de lo que* or the appropriate gender and number of *más/menos del que* are required. See 5.6 for discussion.

(iii) The comparative of adverbs and, in some circumstances, of adjectives, is not distinguishable by form from the superlative. See 5.3.2 for discussion.

(iv) *Más* and *menos* need not be repeated: *Él es más inteligente y emprendedor que su hermano* 'He's more intelligent and enterprising than his brother', *Es menos cómodo y limpio* 'It's less comfortable and clean'.

5.2 Irregular comparative forms

There are six adjectives and adverbs that have irregular comparative forms which are not marked for gender:

<i>bueno/bien</i>	good/well	<i>mejor</i>	better
<i>malo/mal</i>	bad/badly	<i>peor</i>	worse
<i>pequeño</i>	small	<i>menor</i> (or <i>más pequeño</i>)	smaller
<i>grande</i>	big	<i>mayor</i> (or <i>más grande</i>)	bigger/greater
<i>poco</i>	little	<i>menos</i>	less
<i>mucho</i>	much	<i>más</i>	more

When they are used as adjectives, the plural of these words is regularly formed by adding *-es*: *mejores*, *mayores*, etc. When they are used as adverbs they are invariable, as are *menos* and *más*. Examples:

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<i>Estas manzanas son mejores que las de la semana pasada</i>	These apples are better than last week's
<i>El mundo es peor que yo</i> (E. Mendoza, Spain)	The world is worse than me/than I
<i>Sus hermanas hablan mejor que ella</i> (adverb)	Her sisters speak better than she does
<i>Aquí estamos mejor</i> (adverb)	It's better for us here/We're better off here

Notes

(i) The uses of *mayor* and *menor* are discussed at 5.8 and 5.9.

(ii) *Más bueno*, *más malo* are used of moral qualities though *mejor/peor* are more usual: *Pedro es mejor/más bueno que Ricardo* 'Pedro is better (i.e. a better person) than Ricardo', *A mí no me gusta pegar a los niños . . . pero es que éste es el más malo de todos* (E. Arenas, Spain, dialogue) 'I don't like hitting children, but this one's the worst of all', *Es más bueno que el pan* (set phrase) 'He has a heart of gold' (lit. 'He is more good than bread').

(iii) Use of *más* or *menos*, e.g. **más mejor*, with these comparative forms is substandard and comparable to English forms like **'more better'*, **'less worse'*.

5.3 Superlative of adjectives

See 5.4 for the superlative of adverbs. See 16.14.4 for the use of the subjunctive after superlative expressions.

5.3.1 Superlative formed with *el más/menos*

In statements of the type 'the nearest station', 'the smallest tree', the superlative of adjectives is formed with *el/la/los/las más* 'the most' or *el/la/los/las menos* 'the least'. In certain cases, listed at 5.3.2, the definite article is not used.

<i>el más complicado problema/el problema más complicado</i>	the most complicated problem
<i>Chesterton, el escritor más popular de su tiempo, es una de las figuras más simpáticas de la literatura</i> (J.L. Borges, Argentina)	Chesterton, the most popular writer of his time, is one of the most likable figures in literature
<i>lo mejor/peor que te puede suceder . . .</i>	the best/worst thing that can happen to you . . .

Notes

(i) Students of French must avoid repeating the article: *l'exemple le plus intéressant = el ejemplo más interesante* or *el más interesante ejemplo*. **El ejemplo el más interesante* is not Spanish.

(ii) Translation of sentences like 'the best restaurant in Argentina' usually require *de* not *en*: i.e. *el mejor restaurante de (la) Argentina*. See 34.7.1 for discussion.

5.3.2 Superlative of adjectives formed without the definite article

The definite article is not used in superlative constructions in the following cases:

(a) When the subject refers to a course of action rather than to a thing or person:

<i>Sería más fácil dejar su carta sin contestar</i>	It would be easiest (or 'easier') to leave his letter unanswered
---	--

This can be differentiated from the comparative by using *lo*: *Lo más fácil sería dejar su carta sin contestar*.

(b) When a possessive adjective precedes *más* or *menos*:

<i>mi más leal amigo/mi amigo más leal</i>	my most loyal friend
--	----------------------

. . . *pero mi capa más profunda se entristeció* but the deepest layer in me (lit. 'my deepest layer') was saddened
(E. Sábato, Argentina)

Compare the French *mon ami le plus loyal*.

(c) After *estar*, *resultar*, *parecer*, *ponerse* (and other verbs of becoming) and *quedar(se)*:

<i>Ella es la que está más alterada</i>	She's the one who's most upset
<i>Este caballo está más cansado</i>	This horse is the most tired
<i>Aurora parece menos española</i>	Aurora looks least/less Spanish
<i>María se pone más nerviosa cuando mencionan esas cosas</i>	Maria gets most nervous when they mention those things
<i>Queda mejor así</i>	It's best/better like that

Such sentences could also be understood as comparatives. The issue could be clarified by recasting the sentence using *ser*: *Ella es la más alterada*, *Este caballo es el más cansado*, *Aurora es la que parece menos española*, *Este/Éste es el que queda mejor*.

(d) In relative clauses and after nominalizers, i.e. after *el/la/los/las que*, *quien*, *aquel que*, etc. meaning 'the one(s) who/which':

<i>el curso que es menos interesante es . . .</i>	the course that's least interesting is . . .
<i>la que es más abordable</i>	the girl/woman who's most approachable
<i>El patrón fue uno de los que más peces capturó durante los 40 minutos que se dedicaron a la pesca (Granma, Cuba)</i>	The skipper was one of those who caught most fish during the forty minutes dedicated to fishing

(e) When the superlative does not involve comparison with another noun (this includes cases in which something is compared with itself):

<i>El idealismo siempre es más fácil cuando uno es joven</i>	Idealism is always easiest (or 'easier') when one's young
<i>Es en su poemas largos donde es menos convincente</i>	It is in his long poems that he is least (or 'less') convincing
<i>Los domingos es cuando la lluvia es más deprimente</i>	It's on Sundays that the rain is most depressing
<i>Aquí es donde el Rin es más romántico</i> (the Rhine compared with itself)	The Rhine is at its most romantic here

Compare the following where true comparison with another noun is involved:

<i>El amor sin celos es el más noble</i> (compared with other loves)	Love without jealousy is the noblest
<i>Las pizzas con anchoas son las mejores</i>	Pizzas with anchovies are (the) best

5.4 Superlative of adverbs

The definite article cannot be used to form the superlative of an adverb, with the result that the superlative is not always clearly distinguishable from the comparative. Students of French must remember not to use the article: compare *C'est Richard qui danse le mieux* and *Ricardo es el que mejor baila*.

Examples:

<i>De las tres niñas la que canta mejor es Ana</i>	Of the three girls, the one who sings best is Ana
--	---

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Él trabaja menos/más rápido
Cuando más llueve es en verano

He works least/fastest (or 'less'/'faster')
It's in summer that it rains most (or
'more')

Pero el caso de U . . . es el que más
conmoción ha causado en los medios
periodísticos (El País; mayor possible)

But the case of U . . . is the one which
has caused most stir in journalistic
circles

In the unlikely event of real ambiguity, one of the following constructions can be used for the superlative:

Él habla mejor que todos
Él habla mejor que ninguno
Él es quien habla mejor de todos

He speaks better than everyone
He speaks better than any of them
He is the one who speaks best of all of
them

Note

The difference between *el que más me gusta* and *el que me gusta más* 'the one I like more/most' is one of emphasis, the former being stronger and therefore more likely to carry a superlative meaning.

5.5 Más/menos que or más/menos de?

The difference is crucial: *más de* is used before numbers or quantities:

Mi abuelo tiene más de cien años

My grandfather is more than 100 years
old

Son más de las tres y media

It's past 3.30

Estaba seguro de que no aguantarías quieta
durante más de 6 meses (A. Mastretta,
Mexico, dialogue)

I was sure you wouldn't stay still for
more than six months

Compare the following examples in which the expression following *más* or *menos* is not a quantity:

Este restaurante es más caro que antes
Cansa más el viaje que el empleo

This restaurant is dearer than before
The travelling is more tiring than the job

Notes

(i) Care must be taken not to confuse this construction with *no . . . más que . . .* meaning 'only': *No he traído más que mil* (= *Sólo/solo he traído mil*) 'I've only brought 1,000', *No he traído más de mil* 'I haven't brought more than 1,000', *No hay más que cuatro gatos* 'There isn't a soul around'/'The place is completely dead' (lit. 'There are only four cats here'), *No hay más gasolina que la que necesitamos* 'There's only enough petrol/(US) 'gas' as we'll need', *No he traído más que lo que usted ha pedido* 'I've only brought what you asked for'.

(ii) In the following examples *que* must be used, even though a number follows: *Tiene más fuerzas que tres hombres juntos* 'He's stronger than three men together', *Habla más que siete* 'He/She never stops talking' (lit. 'He talks more than seven people').

The reason is that there is no comparison with an actual number. Spanish thus removes an ambiguity that affects English: *Comiste más que tres* 'You ate more than three people (eat)', *Comiste (a) más de tres* 'You ate more than three people' (cannibalism).

5.6 Comparison of quantity with clauses, verb phrases and neuter adjectives/participles

In the preceding section it was noted that 'more/less than' must be translated *más/menos de* before numerals or other quantities.

However, if the quantity is represented by a clause, verb phrase or adjective/participle, as in the English sentences 'He is more intelligent **than you think**', 'It's less difficult **than expected**', a problem arises since *más/menos de* can only appear before nouns or noun phrases: **Es más inteligente de crees* is clearly not Spanish.

In such cases the appropriate form of *del que* must be used to convert the verb phrase into a noun phrase: *Es más inteligente de lo que crees*.

(a) If a comparison of quantity is made with a clause containing a noun or pronoun, *del que* must be used and must agree in number and gender:

<i>Has traído menos aceite del que necesitábamos</i>	You've brought less oil than we needed
<i>Han venido más de las que se matricularon para el curso</i>	More girls/women have come than registered for the course
<i>Tiene más años de los que dice</i>	He's older than he says

(b) If the comparison is made with a verb phrase, a participle or an adjective, *de lo que* must be used:

<i>El viento me vuelve mucho más loca de lo que mi marido y ex maridos dicen que estoy (Carmen Rico-Godoy, Spain)</i>	The wind drives me much crazier than my husbands and ex-husbands say I am
<i>Lo hicieron menos bien de lo que esperábamos</i>	They did it less well than we hoped
<i>No se haga el estúpido más de lo que es (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue; Spain)</i>	Don't try to be more stupid than you are
<i>no se haga más estúpido de lo que es más impresionante de lo esperado (= de lo que se esperaba)</i>	more impressive than was hoped
<i>. . . o si la noche era cálida y menos húmeda de lo habitual (E. Mendoza, Spain)</i>	. . . or if the night was warm and less humid than usual

Notes

(i) This construction often seems awkward to English speakers, but it is necessary in Spanish because *más/menos de* can only precede nouns and because *más que* before a verb or adjective usually means 'rather than': *Gasta más que gana* 'He spends more (i.e. 'rather') than he earns'.

(ii) Constructions on the lines of **Eres más inteligente que pareces* have been attested in good writers in the past, and a few informants thought they might occur in spontaneous speech. Most informants condemned them as badly formed.

(iii) Use of *del que/de lo que* is apparently not always obligatory in Latin America: *Había hecho más que lo posible para que Ángela Vicario se muriera en vida* (G. García Márquez, Colombia; Spain *más de lo posible*), 'She had done more than was possible so that Angela Vicario would have no life at all' (lit. 'die while alive').

(iv) Comparison between two non-neuter adjectives requires *que*: *más azul que verde* 'more blue than red', *más muertos que vivos* 'more dead than alive'.

(v) French is free of the problems raised by *del/de lo que*, but unlike Spanish it uses a redundant negative in comparisons with a clause: *Il en sait plus qu'il n'avoue* = *Él sabe más de lo que admite* 'He knows more than he admits'.

(vi) 'Than ever . . .' is translated *que nunca* (not **que jamás*): *¡Estás más joven que nunca!* 'You're younger than ever!'. This use of *nunca* and of other negative words used with a positive meaning, is discussed at 23.4.

5.7 Más as a colloquial intensifier

Más is often used as an intensifier in familiar speech, without any comparative meaning:

Es que eres más tonto . . .
Está más borracho . . .

Heavens you're stupid . . .
Is he drunk!

5.8 Uses of mayor

Más is used before plural nouns, e.g. *Tengo más amigos que tú* 'I've got more friends than you', and before quantities: *Tiene más dinero que yo* 'He's got more money than me'.

Mayor, which means both 'greater' and 'bigger', is used as follows:

(a) In the same way as *más grande* 'bigger' in comparisons involving physical objects, although it is not normally used of small things like pins, insects, etc:

Esta aula es más grande/mayor que la otra

This lecture room is bigger than the other

Mallorca es la más grande/la mayor de las Baleares

Majorca is the biggest of the Balearic Islands

One can never say **lo mayor*: *Lo más grande lo ponemos abajo* 'Let's put the biggest things underneath'.

(b) To translate 'older' or 'oldest' when applied to people:

Mi hermano es mayor que el tuyo
mi hermano mayor

My brother is older than yours
my elder brother

Tienes dieciséis años pero pareces mayor
... *es ya mayor que su hermana mayor* ...
en realidad mayor de lo que fue nunca Teresa
(J. Marias, Spain, dialogue)

You're sixteen but you look older
... she's already older than her elder
sister ... actually older than Teresa ever
was

Mayor is also a euphemism for *viejo*: *una señora mayor* 'an elderly lady'.

(c) *Mayor* is used to mean 'greater' or 'greatest': *su mayor éxito* 'his greatest success', *el mayor criminal del mundo* 'the greatest criminal in the world', *el mayor peligro* 'the greatest danger', *su mayor preocupación/alegría* 'his/her greatest worry/joy'.

(d) Before nouns denoting size, intensity, frequency, power or quantity, *mayor* or *más* can be used, with *mayor* considered more elegant: *mayor/más anchura* 'greater width', *mayor/más intensidad* 'greater intensity', *mayor/más fuerza* 'greater strength', *mayor/más potencia* 'more power', *mayor/más frecuencia* 'greater frequency', *mayor/más peso* 'more weight'. Further examples:

Más acentuado será el sabor del ajo, cuanto mayor cantidad lleve

The greater the quantity it contains, the more pronounced the garlic flavour will be

El rojo produce mayor efecto de sensualidad

The red produces a greater effect of sensuality

Deseo recibir mayor información
Tiene mayor contenido vitamínico

I would like to receive more information
It has a greater vitamin content

In all these examples *más* is possible, though less elegant.

(e) Before *número* or words and phrases indicating number, *mayor* is obligatory: *en mayor número de casos* 'in a greater number of cases', *mayor índice de mortalidad infantil* 'a higher rate of infantile mortality', *mayor incidencia de accidentes de tráfico* 'a higher rate of traffic accidents'.

(f) Set phrases: *mayor de edad* 'of age', *hacerse mayor* 'to get old', *ganado mayor* 'cattle' (horses, cows, mules only), *calle mayor* 'high street', etc.

(g) *Más grande* can be used as a superlative: *el más grande/mayor pensador moderno* 'the greatest modern thinker', but not in pejorative statements: *el mayor granuja del país* 'the biggest rogue in the country'.

5.9 Uses of menor

Menos is used before plural nouns – *Tengo menos amigos que tú* 'I've got less friends than you' – and before quantities: *Tiene menos dinero que yo* 'He's got less money than me'.

Menor differs from *mayor* in that it cannot refer to dimensions: *Esta habitación es más pequeña que ésa/esa* not **menor que ésa/esa*, *Ella es más pequeña de tamaño/más baja* 'She's smaller in size'. It can be used for dimensions only where English would allow 'less': *El área es menor de lo que parece* 'The area is less/smaller than it looks'.

Note also *mi hermano menor/pequeño* 'my younger brother', but *Mi hermano es más joven/pequeño que yo* 'My brother is younger than me'. Also *el más pequeño de la familia*.

**Lo menor* is also impossible: *lo más pequeño* 'what's smallest'/'the smallest things'.

Menor is used in the same contexts as *mayor* in (b), (c), (d) and (e) in the previous section.

Examples:

Diego es tres años menor que Martita y cuatro que Sergio (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain)
Virginia era unos meses menor que yo (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)
Usted no tendrá la menor dificultad (or *mínima* or *más pequeña*)
El riesgo de un enfrentamiento es cada vez menor

Diego is three years younger than Martita and four younger than Sergio
 Virginia was a few months younger than me
 You won't have the slightest difficulty
 The risk of a confrontation is declining

Common set phrases: *menor de edad* 'under age', *apto para menores* 'suitable for minors/young people'.

5.10 Mucho más, mucho menos, poco más, etc.

Before *más*, *menos*, *mayor* and *menor* when these qualify a noun, *mucho* and *poco* are used as adjectives and must agree in number and gender with the noun that follows – a fact that English-speakers are prone to forget:

Tienen muchos más hijos que tú
El proyecto era de mucha más envergadura que el anterior
Cincuenta personas eran muchas menos que en ocasiones anteriores
mucha menor cantidad

They have many more children than you
 The plan was much wider in scope than the previous one
 Fifty people was much less than on previous occasions
 a much smaller quantity

Elsewhere, before adjectives and adverbs, *mucho* and *poco* are used as adverbs and are invariable in form:

La diferencia era mucho mayor/menor
Los alijos de hashish eran mucho más grandes de lo que se esperaba (El País)

The difference was much greater/less
 The hauls of hashish were much greater than expected

Los problemas son mucho menos complejos
de lo que se temía

The problems are much less complex
than feared

5.11 'The more . . . the more . . .'/'the less . . . the less . . .'

Cuanto más . . . más . . . , cuanto menos . . . menos . . . are the standard formulas:

Cuanto más pensaba más me afligía . . .
(J. Cortázar, Argentina, dialogue)

The more I thought, the more upset I got

*Cuanto menos lo pienses de antemano, menos
te va a doler*

The less you think about it beforehand,
the less it'll hurt

*Cuanto mayor sea la distancia de una galaxia
a la Tierra, más deprisa se aleja* (ABC,
Spain)

The greater the distance between a
galaxy and the Earth, the faster it recedes

Cuanto más, mejor

the more the better

Colloquial speech may replace *cuanto* by *mientras* in this construction; this sounds popular or substandard in Spain but it is considered normal by educated Latin-Americans. Use of *contra* or *entre* for *cuanto* in this construction is typical of everyday speech in many parts of Latin America, but it is usually avoided in formal writing:

*. . . mientras más pienses en ella, más tuya
la harás* (C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue)

The more you think of her, the more you
will make her yours

*. . . la cabeza gacha, entre menos me vea,
mejor . . .* (E. Poniatowska, Mexico,
dialogue)

. . . with my head bowed, the less he
sees of me the better . . .

See 24.6 note (i) for the use of the accent with *cuanto*.

Note

'All the more . . .', 'not so much . . . but that . . .' may be translated by *tanto . . . cuanto*: *No es tanto que entre dos personas . . . no haya secretos porque así lo deciden . . . cuanto que no es posible dejar de contar . . .* (J. Marías, Spain) 'It's not so much that there are no secrets between two people because they decide it should be this way, but that it's not possible to avoid telling . . .'

5.12 'More and more . . .', 'less and less . . .'

Cada vez más/menos are the standard translations:

Está cada vez más delgado
Hace cada vez menos calor

He's getting thinner and thinner
The weather's getting less and less hot

5.13 Superlative time expressions

A neuter construction may be required:

Cenamos lo más tarde a las ocho

We have dinner/supper at eight o'clock
at the latest

*Lo antes/más temprano que puedo salir de
casa es a la una*

The earliest I can leave the house is at
one

5.14 Miscellaneous translations of English comparatives and superlatives

*Todos le interesaban, el párroco no el que
menos*

All the men interested her, not least the
parish priest

Ninguno trabaja mucho, y tú menos que todos
lo menos que podrías hacer
De los dos, este libro es el que más se lee

Dale cuanto dinero puedas/Dale todo el dinero que puedas
la mejor solución posible
el segundo mejor/peor
Tan duquesa es como mi padre

None of them works much, and you least of all
 the least you could do
 Of the two, this book is read more/the most
 Give him as much money as you can

 the best possible solution
 the second best/worst
 She's as much a duchess as I am (ironic.
 Lit. 'She's as much a duchess as my father is')

5.15 Comparisons of equality

5.15.1 *Tan como, tanto como*

The formula is *tan . . . como* or *tanto . . . como* 'as . . . as', not *tanto . . . que* which can only mean 'so much that': *Se rió tanto que por poco revienta* 'He laughed so much he nearly burst'. *Tan* is used before adjectives, adverbs and nouns; *tanto* is used before *como* itself or when nothing follows:

<i>Estos/Éstos no parecen tan grandes como los anteriores</i>	These don't seem as big as the previous ones
<i>Usted lo sabe tan bien como yo</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue)	You know as well as I do
<i>Contestó tan inteligentemente como quien más</i>	She answered as intelligently as the best of them
<i>No eres tan hombre como él</i>	You're not as much of a man as him
<i>No hablo tanto como tú</i>	I don't talk as much as you

Other non-comparative uses of *tan* and *tanto* are discussed at 9.16.

5.15.2 *Igual que, lo mismo que, tal como*

These are used to express equality. *Igual que* is used after verbs, not *igual a* (for which see 5.15.3):

<i>Escribe igual que/lo mismo que tú</i> (not * <i>igual como</i> , * <i>lo mismo como</i>)	She writes the same way as you
<i>Me trató igual que siempre</i> (G. García Márquez, Colombia)	She treated me the same as always
<i>Lo hice tal como me lo dijiste</i>	I did it just/exactly as you told me to

Notes

(i) Comparison of equality with verb phrases can also be expressed by the formula *del mismo modo que/de la misma manera que/de igual modo que/de igual manera que*: *Argüía de la misma manera que muchos filósofos de la época* 'He argued in the same way as many philosophers of the day'.

(ii) *Diferente, distinto*: *Es diferente del que tú tienes* 'It's different from the one that you've got', *Esta silla es diferente de la otra* 'This chair is different from the other one', *Es diferente/distinto a ti* 'He's different to you'.²

For Latin-American colloquial constructions like *Piensa distinto* 'He thinks differently' (for *Piensa de manera distinta*), see the note to 31.3.3.

See 9.11 for further discussion of *mismo*.

² Speakers of North-American English may prefer 'different than' in these sentences.

5.15.3 Igual or igualmente?

Igualmente means 'equally', but *igual* (as well as being an adjective meaning 'equal') is an invariable adverb in its own right meaning 'the same'.

otros problemas igualmente difíciles other equally difficult problems

but:

una bata que le caía igual que hecha a medida a housecoat that fitted her exactly as if
(L. Goytisolo, Spain) it had been made to measure

¿Por qué todos lo hacen igual? (C. Rico- Why do all men do the same?
Godoy, Spain)

En eso ustedes son igual a las mujeres You're the same as women in that
(M. Puig, Argentina, dialogue) (also respect
igual que. . .)

Es igual que tú (also *igual a ti*) She's the same as you

Tú eres igualmente delgado/Tú eres igual de You're equally slim
delgado

Lo hace igual de bien que tú She does it as well as you do

Note

In Spain, *igual* very often functions colloquially as an adverb meaning 'maybe' (i.e. meaning *quizá*, *tal vez* or *a lo mejor*, discussed at 16.3.2): *Yo no sé lo que me espera hoy. Igual llego tarde* (Carmen Rico-Godoy, Spain, dialogue) 'I don't know what's in store for me today. Maybe I'll get back late'.

This is familiar style, rejected by some as 'common' and probably confined to Spain. Latin-Americans may interpret *igual* as meaning 'anyway', e.g. *Igual nos vemos mañana* 'We're seeing one another tomorrow anyway'.

6

Demonstrative adjectives and pronouns

Spanish demonstrative adjectives and demonstrative pronouns are identical in form: *este* means 'this' or 'this one' (masc.), *esas* and *aquellas* mean 'those' or 'those ones' (fem.). The ambiguities that very rarely arise from this can be removed by spelling the pronouns with an accent; see 6.3 for discussion.

Spanish differs from French, German and English in having two words for 'that', depending on the distance in time or space between the speaker and the object referred to.¹

6.1 Forms of demonstrative adjectives and pronouns

	this	that (near)	that (far)
masc.	<i>este</i>	<i>ese</i>	<i>aquel</i>
fem.	<i>esta</i>	<i>esa</i>	<i>aquella</i>
	these	those (near)	those (far)
masc.	<i>estos</i>	<i>esos</i>	<i>aquellos</i>
fem.	<i>estas</i>	<i>esas</i>	<i>aquellas</i>

The demonstratives have neuter forms, *esto*, *eso* and *aquello*, which are discussed separately in Chapter 7.

Notes

(i) See 6.3 for when to write these with an accent.

(ii) The masculine singular forms do not end in -o!

(iii) *Esta*, *esa* and *aquella* should be used before feminine nouns beginning with stressed *a-* or *ha-*: *esta agua* 'this water', *esa aula* 'that lecture hall', *aquella haya* 'that beech tree over there'. But forms like *este arma* 'this weapon', *este área* 'this area' are very common in spontaneous speech and sometimes appear in informal written styles.

¹ The first edition of this grammar explained *este*, *ese* and *aquel* in terms of the pronoun system: *este* 'this near me', *ese* 'that near you', *aquel* 'that near him/her'. It now seems to us more accurate to say that the difference between *ese* and *aquel* simply reflects distance from the speaker.

(iv) In Latin America *este*, and in Spain *esto*, are used and abused like the English 'er . . .' to fill pauses while the speaker is thinking.

(v) When two or more nouns are involved, the demonstratives are repeated unless the nouns refer to the same thing: *este hombre y esta mujer* 'this man and (this) woman' but *este poeta y filósofo* 'this poet and philosopher' (same man).

6.2 Position of demonstrative adjectives

Normally before the noun: *esta miel* 'this honey', *ese árbol* 'that tree', *aquellas regiones* 'those regions'.

In spoken language they may appear after the noun, in which case they strongly imply that the thing referred to has been mentioned before or is very familiar. In many cases this implies irritation, exasperation or an ironic tone and the construction should be used with caution. Compare *esa mujer* 'that woman' (neutral tone) and *la mujer esa* 'that woman . . .' (sarcastic or weary tone).

However, a demonstrative adjective placed after the noun may simply indicate another reference to a well-known topic, as in *Fue él quien se casó con la gallega esa* 'He was the one who married that Galician girl (whom we were talking about, whom we both know)'.

Examples:

Pero con la agencia esa que ha montado, se está forrando el riñón (A. Buero Vallejo, Spain, dialogue)

But with that agency he's set up, he's simply raking it in

En seguida dejé de tener importancia para la gente aquella (F. Umbral, Spain, dialogue)

I immediately ceased to have any importance for those people

The definite article is obligatory if a demonstrative adjective follows the noun. The demonstrative in this case remains an adjective even though it follows the noun, so it is not written with an accent.

6.3 When does one write *este*, *ese*, *aquel* with an accent?

The present confused situation can be summarized thus:

(a) According to the Academy the accent is virtually never necessary on these words, so the best advice to learners is when in doubt leave it out. Omission of the accent looks much less illiterate than incorrect use of it.

(b) The neuter pronouns, *esto*, *eso* and *aquello* are **never** written with an accent.

The old rules of spelling required that the demonstrative pronouns should always be distinguished from the adjectives by adding an accent, but even in carefully edited texts printed before 1959, many inconsistencies appear. The Academy's *Nuevas normas* of 1959 now state that the accent is required only to remove ambiguities of the sort found in *esta protesta* 'this protest' and *ésta protesta* 'this woman is protesting' or *ese español* 'that Spaniard' and *ése español* 'that Spanish one'. Since such ambiguities almost never appear in written Spanish (because context makes the meaning clear), the accent can in practice be omitted. Both the Academy and Seco (1992), 189, now consider sentences like *esta es mía* 'this one's mine', *un libro como ese* 'a book like that one' to be correct.

Nevertheless, most publishing houses, newspaper editors, the more cautious grammarians and ordinary citizens everywhere still write – or try to write – the accent on the demonstrative pronouns even when there is no ambiguity: *El País* orders its journalists to ignore the Academy and always write the accent on the pronouns. The foreign student must therefore choose between following the Academy and thereby offending the eye of educated Spanish-speakers, or trying systematically to distinguish demonstrative adjectives from pronouns, which is not always easy.

In this book we show both possibilities, e.g. *un libro como ese/ése* ‘a book like that one’, although we omit the accent in a few cases where we cannot decide whether the demonstrative is an adjective or a pronoun.

There is one important inconsistency in printed usage. It has always been the practice in modern times, even before 1959 and among the most conservative writers, to omit the accent from demonstrative pronouns that are the antecedent of a relative clause or act as nominalizers (*aquel que, este de, etc.*); the reason for this is not entirely clear. As a result we write *Esta novela es mejor que aquella en que . . .* ‘This novel is better than that in which . . .’, *este/ese que . . .* ‘this/that one that . . .’, *aquel de ayer . . .* ‘the one from yesterday . . .’, etc.

Point (b) above can hardly be over-stressed: the neuter pronouns *esto, eso* and *aquello* (discussed in Chapter 7) are **never** written with an accent.

Examples of demonstrative pronouns:

Dame otro cuchillo – este/éste no corta

Give me another knife – this one doesn’t cut

Antonio salía cada vez más de casa, circunstancia esta/ésta que a su madre no le pasaba inadvertida (Note position of dem. pronoun in apposition)

Antonio left the house more and more, this being a circumstance which did not pass unnoticed by his mother

. . . su proximidad o lejanía respecto de la persona que habla o de aquella a quien se habla (Academy Grammar, 1928 edition, 39; accent omitted from *aquella* followed by rel. pronoun)

. . . one’s closeness or distance in relation to the person speaking or to whom one is speaking

Note

Use of demonstratives to refer to someone present is humorous or insulting: *Pregúntaselo a éste* ‘Ask this one here’ (e.g. pointing to her husband), *¡Éstos/Estos fuera!* ‘Get this lot out!’

6.4 Use of *este, ese* and *aquel*

6.4.1. General

(a) *Este* refers to things near to or associated with the speaker and is equivalent to ‘this’: *este libro* ‘this book’, *estos arbustos* ‘these bushes’, *esta catástrofe* ‘this catastrophe (that has just happened)’.

(b) As far as physical distance is concerned, *ese* means ‘that’: *ese libro* ‘that book’, *esos árboles* ‘those trees’. It can refer to objects at any distance from the speaker and is therefore interchangeable with *aquel* provided no contrast is made with something even further away.

As far as time is concerned, *ese* refers to something in the past: *esa catástrofe* 'that catastrophe (that we were talking about before)', *en esas circunstancias* 'in those circumstances (we referred to earlier)'.

Examples:

<i>este/éste de aquí</i>	this one here
<i>ese/ése de ahí</i>	that one just there
<i>aquella/aquél de allí²</i>	that one over there
<i>no ese/ése sino aquella/aquél</i>	not that one, but that one over there
<i>Prefiero ese que tú tienes</i>	I prefer that one (masc.) that you've got
<i>¿Quién se acuerda ya de aquellas tardes sin televisión?</i>	Who can still remember those evenings without television?

6.4.2 *Aquel* or *ese*?

Aquel may be yielding ground to *ese* in some dialects: some grammarians complain about a tendency to use *ese* where *aquel* is more elegant. But the distinction is a real one for the immense majority of speakers on both continents, and must be respected by the foreign student in those contexts in which a distinction is obligatory.

(a) As far as spatial distance is concerned, *aquel* is only necessary when we need to differentiate between 'there' and 'further over there':

— <i>¿Quién plantó ese árbol?</i>	'Who planted that tree?'
— <i>¿Ese/Ése?</i>	'That one?'
— <i>No, aquel de detrás</i>	'No, the one behind'
<i>no esa torre sino aquella/aquella</i>	not that tower but the one further away

(b) It is **optionally** used to indicate something at some distance from the speaker:

<i>Tráeme aquella/esa taza (que está allí)</i>	Bring me that cup (from over there)
<i>¿Ves aquella/esa montaña?</i>	Can you see that mountain?

(c) As far as time is concerned, *aquel* indicates the distant past. Once an event in the past has been mentioned, *ese* can be used in subsequent references to it:

<i>Recuerdo que aquel día hubo tormenta y que en aquella/esa ocasión yo había salido sin paraguas</i>	I remember that that day there was a storm and on that occasion I'd gone out without an umbrella
<i>¿Te acuerdas del 39? Pues en aquella/esa época yo vivía en Bilbao (Esa is possible here because the year is specified)</i>	Do you remember '39? Well, at that time I was living in Bilbao
<i>Debe de haber andado ya por los sesenta años cuando se embarcó con aquel horror de mujer (S. Pitol, Mexico, dialogue; she is no longer in his life.)</i>	He must have been getting on for sixty when he fell in with (lit. 'set sail with') that frightful woman

In some phrases *aquel* is obligatory:

<i>¡Qué noche aquella/aquella!</i>	What a night that was!
<i>¡Qué tiempos aquellos/aquellos!</i>	What times they were!

² *Ahí* '(just) there' suggests a middle distance between *aquí* 'here' and *allí* '(over) there'. See 31.6.1 for details.

Further examples of *ese* and *aquel*:

Era como uno de esos payasos de circo que dan miedo a los niños (Aquello would only be possible here if such circus clowns no longer existed)

He was like one of those circus clowns who frighten the children

¿Te acuerdas de aquel escritorio que el abuelo quemó cuando tenías cinco años? (Aquel appropriate for something no longer in existence)

Do you remember that desk that grandfather burnt when you were five?

. . . la luna ya como de invierno, con su halo violeta de medusa y aquellas estrellas como un hielo hecho añicos (L. Goytisolo, Spain) (Aquellas appropriate for a childhood memory)

. . . the moon like a winter moon now, with its violet halo like a jellyfish's, and those stars like shattered ice

Notes

(i) In writing, *aquel que* (no written accent) replaces *el que* if the latter is followed by a relative pronoun. See 6.5c and 35.13 for examples.

(ii) *Aquel* should not be used in conjunction with a historic present because of the absurdity of simultaneously stressing the remoteness and the immediacy of an action; i.e. not **en aquel año Cervantes escribe el Quijote* 'in that year Cervantes wrote *Don Quijote*' but either *en este año Cervantes escribe Don Quijote*, or *en aquel año Cervantes escribió el Quijote*.

6.4.3 'The former, the latter'

Since *aquél/aquel* denotes something remote and *éste/este* something close, they conveniently translate 'former' and 'latter':

La Universidad de México . . . no favorece ni los estudios ni la amistad. La ausencia de disciplina y normas de selección impide aquéllos; la plétora indiscriminada de una población de doscientos mil estudiantes dificulta ésta (C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue)

Mexico University encourages neither study nor friendship. The lack of discipline and admission qualifications prevents the former; the undifferentiated mass of a student population of 200,000 hinders the latter

6.5 Translation problems involving demonstratives

(a) 'The . . . which/who', 'those . . . who', etc.

El que or *quien* are the usual equivalents; *aquel que* (usually written without an accent) is used in formal language: *Que se ponga de pie la que ha dicho eso* 'Stand up the girl who said that', etc. See Chapter 36 (Nominalizers) for discussion.

(b) 'Those of them', 'those of you', etc. *Aquellos de* is frowned on, except perhaps before *ustedes* or *vosotros*:

los que vivimos en Gibraltar
los nicaragüenses que sabemos la verdad

those of us who live in Gibraltar
those of us Nicaraguans who know the truth

aquellos de (entre) ustedes que afirman eso
los que no hayan firmado el formulario

those of you who claim that
those (of them/you) who haven't signed the form

Note

**Los de ellos* or **aquellos de ellos* in this context is not Spanish.

(c) 'The one in which', 'those where', etc.

Aquel, customarily written without an accent in this construction, is a literary replacement for *el que* when a preposition governs a relative pronoun, i.e. one writes *La habitación era más cómoda que aquella en que había dormido antes* 'The room was more comfortable than the one he had slept in before'. The spoken language usually prefers to repeat the noun: *La habitación era más cómoda que la habitación en la que/donde había dormido antes*; **la en que* is not possible. See 35.13 for details.

(d) 'That's why . . .', 'that's where', 'that's who', 'that was when', etc.

Translation of these phrases may involve the problem of 'cleft' sentences, e.g.:

Fue por eso por lo que pagó demasiado
(Lat. Am. *Fue por eso que pagó demasiado*)
Fue con ésa esa con la que se casó

That was why he paid too much

It was that girl whom he married

See 36.2 for a detailed discussion of 'cleft' sentences.

7

Neuter article and pronouns

7.1 Neuter gender: general

Nouns in Classical Latin could have one of three genders, masculine, feminine or neuter. Most neuter nouns came to be confused with masculine nouns in Vulgar Latin, and nowadays all traces of the neuter have vanished from the Spanish noun system.

However a few neuter pronouns and an article have survived in Spanish and remain as important features of the modern language. These forms are the 'neuter article' *lo*, the neuter third-person pronoun *ello* and its object form *lo*, the neuter relative pronouns *lo que* and *lo cual*, the neuter nominalizers *lo que* and *lo de*, and the neuter demonstrative pronouns *esto*, *eso* and *aquello*.

Neuter pronouns are necessary in Spanish to refer to concepts or ideas that have no gender. Masculine and feminine articles and pronouns can refer only to nouns or pronouns, present or implied, and nouns can be only masculine or feminine. Examples should make this clear:

*No quiero hablar de aquel/aquél/aquella/
aquella*¹
No quiero hablar de aquello
*No me gusta ese/ése/esa/ésa*¹
No me gusta eso
los nuevos/las nuevas
lo nuevo

I don't want to talk about **that one** (i.e. some masc./fem. noun)
I don't want to talk about **that**
I don't like **that one** (French *celui-là/celle-là*)
I don't like **that** (*cela*)
the new ones (masc./fem.)
what is new

For *lo que*, *lo cual* as relative pronouns (meaning 'which . . .'), see 35.6.

For *lo que* and *lo de* as nominalizers (i.e. 'the thing that/of . . .'), see 36.1.3 and 36.1.5. For the humorous *la que . . .* for *lo que . . .* see 36.1.4 note (iii).

For the colloquial *la de* meaning 'lots of' see 3.2.30.

For *lo* as a masculine direct object pronoun = 'him/it', see Chapter 12.

For the neuter pronouns *todo* 'everything', *algo* 'something', *mucho* 'a lot', and *poco* 'a little', see Chapter 9.

7.2 The 'neuter article' *lo*

7.2.1 *Lo* with masculine singular adjectives or with adverbs

A masculine singular adjective, or an adverb preceded by *lo*, becomes a sort of abstract noun. An adjective then often becomes a rough equivalent of an

¹ For the optional use of the accent on these pronouns, see 6.3.

English adjective + 'thing', but in many cases translation requires ingenuity:

(a) with adjectives:

Lo importante es que diga la verdad

The important thing is that he should tell the truth

Lo bueno sería que tú volvieras a perder el dinero

What would be great (ironic) is if you lost the money again

Lo bueno de tu casa es que tiene mucha luz

The good thing about your house is that it's full of light

Lo malo es que no quiere

The trouble is that she doesn't want to Am I on the right lines?

¿Estoy en lo correcto?

Father has found out about us

Papá se ha enterado de lo nuestro

To the impression of enormous antiquity were added others: the impression of endlessness, of horror, of utter irrationality

A la impresión de enorme antigüedad se agregaron otras: la de lo interminable, la de lo atroz, la de lo completamente insensato

(J.L. Borges, Argentina)

a pesar de lo antes dicho

despite what was said earlier

Lo verdaderamente increíble es que yo te haya encontrado

The really incredible thing is the fact that I've found you

(S. Puértolas, Spain)

lo nunca visto en Estados Unidos

what has never been seen before in the USA

Note

In sentences with *ser* the verb apparently agrees with the predicate: *Lo mejor de la película son los actores* 'The best thing in the film is (lit. 'are') the actors'. This topic of the unexpected agreement of *ser* (and a few other verbs) with its predicate is discussed more fully at 2.3.3.

(b) with adverbs or adverbial phrases:

Hazlo lo más rápidamente que puedas

Do it as quickly as you can

Cuélgalo lo más arriba/atrás que puedas

Hang it as far up/back as you can

Lo antes que puedo salir de casa es a las seis

The earliest I can leave home is at six

Baja lo de allí arriba

Take down everything from up there

Notes

(i) Other Romance languages lack this device: *le plus tragique* can mean both 'the most tragic thing' and 'the most tragic one'; the Italian *il bello e il brutto* can mean 'beauty and ugliness' or 'the beautiful one and the ugly one'.

(ii) For the choice between the indicative and the subjunctive in constructions with *lo* + adjective + *es que*, e.g. *lo curioso es que . . .*, see 16.6.3.

(iii) *Lo* is occasionally found with a noun used adjectivally, although this construction is uncommon: *Ya te salió lo mujer* (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue) 'Here goes the woman in you' (lit. 'the woman in you came out'), *Ya sabes lo torbellino que es* 'You know what a whirlwind he is'.

(iv) When *bastante* and *suficiente* occur in phrases of the kind 'clever enough to . . .', 'he did it well enough to . . .', they are preceded by *lo* and followed by *para*. The *lo* survives even if *para* and what follows are deleted: *El cuello de su gabardina estaba lo bastante abierto para permitirme contemplar el collar de perlas* (J. Marias, Spain) 'The collar of her raincoat was open enough to let me see her pearl necklace', *No la conozco lo suficiente para invitarla/No la conozco lo suficiente* 'I don't know her well enough to invite her'/'I don't know her well enough'.

(v) Colours may be turned into rather vague abstract nouns by using *lo*: *lo verde* 'greenness', *lo azul del cielo* 'the blueness of the sky'. However, when followed by *de*, colours are not usually vague abstractions but masculine nouns, and are translatable by the usual English names of specific colours: *El verde de sus ojos me fascina* 'The green of his/her eyes fascinates me', *el amarillo del poniente* 'the yellow of the sunset'.

7.2.2 Lo plus adjectives or adverbs translating 'how', etc.

Lo with an adjective or adverb often translates the English 'how' or some similar word + an adjective or adverb.

It commonly occurs after verbs of perception ('see', 'realize', 'understand', 'know') and liking or disliking. When used thus the adjective must agree with the noun:

(a) with adjectives and nouns used adjectivally:

No me había dado cuenta de lo guapa que era I hadn't realized how attractive she was
Me irritan por lo tontos que son I find them irritating because of their silliness

¿No te has fijado en lo delgada que se ha quedado? (A. Buero Vallejo, Spain, dialogue) Haven't you noticed how thin she's become?

Tal vez no haya salido todo lo buena que yo creía (M. Puig, Argentina, dialogue) Perhaps she hasn't turned out to be as good as I thought

Pues sí, Diego, ya sabes lo desastre que soy (C. Martín-Godoy, Spain; noun used as adjective) Well yes, Diego, you know what a disaster I am

(b) with adverbs and adverbial phrases:

Yo llegué confiando en lo bien que lo iba a pasar I arrived sure of what a good time I was going to have

Haga que hablen de usted por lo bien que habla inglés (Newspaper advertisement, Spain) Get them talking about you because you speak English so well

Hay que ver lo tarde que es I can't believe how late it is (lit. 'you have to see how late it is')

Notes

(i) A common colloquial construction is *con lo* + adjective. Translation varies with context: *Pobre Ana, con lo enferma que está* . . . 'Poor Anna, and her being so ill', *Parece mentira que no te guste, con lo rico que está* 'It seems impossible that you don't like it. It's so delicious', etc.

(ii) *De* + *lo* + comparative adjective is also found in familiar speech as an intensifying phrase: *Viene de lo más arregladita* 'She's coming all dressed up', *Tomaban su cerveza de lo más tranquilos* (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue) 'They were drinking their beer really quietly'.

(iii) In expressions of cause *por* or *de* can be used before *lo* + adjective: *No pudo pasar por lo gordo que estaba*/*No pudo pasar de (lo) gordo que estaba* 'He couldn't get through because he was so fat'.

7.3 Ello

This is a neuter third-person pronoun. It is invariable in form and can be used to translate 'it' when this pronoun does not refer to any specific noun. Compare *En cuanto al régimen militar, prefiero no hablar de él* 'As for the military regime, I prefer not to talk about it' (masc. singular) and *Todo fue tremendamente violento, y prefiero no hablar de ello* 'It was all tremendously embarrassing, and I prefer not to talk about it' (neuter).

Ello can be used as a subject pronoun or it can be combined with a preposition, but it cannot be used as a direct object pronoun: *lo* is its direct object form.

When it is the subject of a verb, it normally requires translation by 'this'.

This use as a subject is rather literary; *esto* comes more readily in speech:

*No te preocupes por ello, que no se me
olvida²
Por ello ya no se fía de nadie*

Don't worry about that – I haven't
forgotten about it
Because of that she doesn't trust
anybody any more

*Habitó un siglo en la Ciudad de los
Inmortales. Cuando la derribaron, aconsejó la
fundación de otra. Ello no debe sorprendernos
. . . (J.L. Borges, Argentina)*

He dwelt for a century in the City of the
Immortals. When they demolished it, he
recommended the foundation of another.
This (fact) should not surprise us . . .

7.4 Lo as a neuter pronoun

Lo is the direct object pronoun corresponding to *ello*.

For *lo* 'him'/'it' (referring to masculine nouns) see Chapter 12.

¿Lo hacemos o no?

Shall we do it or not?

*¿No sabíais que estaba prohibido? No, no lo
sabíamos*

Didn't you know it was forbidden? No,
we didn't know (it)

*Ya nadie la llamaba Clarita, como lo habían
hecho siempre sus difuntos padres y marido
(M. Puig, Argentina, dialogue)*

By now nobody called her Clarita, as her
deceased parents and husband had done

Notes

(i) *Lo* is used to echo or resume the predicate of *ser* and *estar* and the object of *haber* 'there is/are': —*Parece buena la tierra desde aquí.* —*Lo es* "'The land looks good from here.'" "It is", (lit. 'it is it'), —*Usted no es don Antonio.* —*¿Y si lo fuera?* "'You're not don Antonio.'" "And (what) if I were?'" , *La luna está muerta y lo ha estado siempre* 'The Moon is dead and always has been', *¿Tolera estar solo, o tolera la necesidad que tenga su cónyuge de estarlo?* (quiz on marriage in ABC, Spain), 'Can you stand being alone, or can you stand your partner's need to be (alone)?'.

This resumptive *lo* is often omitted from Latin-American speech and sometimes in Latin-American writing.

See 30.2.2 for the resumptive pronoun with *haber* 'there is/are'.

(ii) *Lo* is used in many colloquial phrases to indicate something implied but not specified: *El ministro lo tiene difícil* (Cambio16, Spain.) 'The minister is in a difficult situation', *En eso las mujeres lo tenemos mejor* (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain) 'In that respect we women are better off', *Se lo están poniendo mal* 'They're making things difficult for him/her'.

(iii) *Lo* is sometimes used redundantly before *todo* to make the latter more specific in meaning: compare *Miguel lo sabe todo* 'Miguel knows it all/all about it', and *Miguel sabe todo* 'Miguel knows everything'.

(iv) For Latin-American *?se los dije* 'I said it to them', see 11.13.2.

7.5 Neuter demonstrative pronouns

These take the invariable forms *esto*, *eso* and *aquello*. Since they cannot be confused with demonstrative adjectives, they *never* take the written accent – a fact that learners and native speakers constantly forget.

They refer to no noun in particular (cf. French. *ceci*, *cela*).

The difference between *esto* 'this', *eso* 'that' and *aquello* 'that', (distant) reflects the difference between *este*, *ese*, and *aquel*, discussed at 6.4:

¿Quién ha hecho esto?

Who did this?

² See 33.4.4b for this use of *que*.

Quisiera llamar a cobro revertido. De eso nada

. . . había comprendido cómo todo aquello jamás tuvo nada que ver con el humor ni con el buen humor (A. Bryce Echenique, Peru)

Prefiero no pensar en todo aquello/eso
¿Qué hay de aquello/eso de los billetes falsos?

¿Cómo podía yo pensar que aquello que parecía tan mentira era verdadero?
(J. Cortázar, Argentina, dialogue)

I'd like to make a transfer charge/collect call. No way/Out of the question
. . . I had understood how all that never had anything to do with humour or good temper

I'd rather not think about all that
What's happening about that business of the forged notes?
How could I think that that thing which seemed such a lie was true?

Notes

(i) *Aquello* often corresponds to 'the saying that', though *eso* may also be used: *En realidad todo se reduce a aquello de que ojos que no ven . . .* (J. Cortázar, Argentina, dialogue) 'Really it all boils down to "what the eye doesn't see . . ."'

(ii) The choice between a neuter or non-neuter demonstrative may cause problems: compare *Esto es un soneto* 'This is a sonnet' and *Éste/Este es un soneto – los demás sólo tienen trece versos* 'This (poema) is a sonnet – the rest have only thirteen lines'.

If the speaker has in mind a specific noun, the masculine or feminine pronoun must be used as appropriate unless the speaker is referring to a type of thing. For example, pointing to a coat in a shop window one could say *Eso es lo que quiero* 'That's the (type of) thing I want' or *Ese/Ése es el que quiero* 'That's the **one** I want'. Compare the following: *No tengo ni talento, ni fuerza. Esa/Ésa es la verdad* (E. Sabato, Argentina, dialogue; *eso* also possible because it refers to the whole of the statement) 'I have neither talent nor strength. That's the truth', *Esa/Ésa es otra de las invenciones de ustedes* (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue) 'That's another of your inventions', *¿Qué es esto?* 'What's this?', *¿Quién es éste/este?* 'Who's this (man or boy)?', *Éste/Este es el problema* 'This is the problem', *Esto es un problema* 'This is a problem', *Esto no es una limosna sino un derecho* 'This isn't charity (lit. 'alms') but a right', *Si a esto se puede llamar marido, que venga Dios y lo vea* (neuter pronoun appropriate, given the tone of the remark) 'If you can call this (thing) a husband, then I'm a Dutchman' (lit. 'then let God come and see it').

When the subject of the verb is a noun, the pronoun agrees with it: *La verdad es ésta/esta*, 'The truth is this', *Los problemas son éstos/estos* 'The problems are these'.

8

Possessive adjectives and pronouns

8.1 General

Spanish possessives have two forms. The short forms, *mi*, *tu*, *su*, etc. are the normal, unstressed possessive adjectives and appear in front of a noun or noun phrase. These correspond to the English 'my', 'your', 'his', 'her': *mi libro* 'my book', *su casa* 'her/his/your house'.

The full forms, *mío*, *tuyo*, *suyo*, etc. roughly correspond to the English 'mine', 'yours', 'hers', etc. and can only follow the noun or stand alone: *un amigo mío* 'a friend of mine', *De los dos prefiero el tuyo* 'Of the two I prefer yours', etc.

Number and gender agreement is determined by the number and gender of the noun possessed. All forms agree in number, but only those whose masculine singular ends in *-o* agree in gender.

Points to watch are:

(a) Replacement of the possessive adjectives by the definite article when the identity of the possessor is obvious: *Me he roto el brazo* 'I've broken my arm', *Dame la mano* 'Give me your hand' (see 8.3.4). This occurs much more frequently than in French;

(b) The difference between *es mío* and *es el mío* (see 8.4.2).

8.2 Forms of the possessives

8.2.1 Short forms of possessives

Personal pronoun	Singular	Plural	
<i>yo</i>	<i>mi</i>	<i>mis</i>	my
<i>tú (and vos)</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>tus</i>	your (familiar)
<i>él/ella</i>	<i>su</i>	<i>sus</i>	his/her
<i>usted</i>	<i>su</i>	<i>sus</i>	your (polite)
<i>ellos/ellas</i>	<i>su</i>	<i>sus</i>	their
<i>ustedes</i>	<i>su</i>	<i>sus</i>	your (polite)

Only *nuestro* and *vuestro* are marked for gender:

<i>nosotros/nosotras</i>	masc.	<i>nuestro</i>	<i>nuestros</i>	our
	fem.	<i>nuestra</i>	<i>nuestras</i>	
<i>vosotros/vosotras</i>	masc.	<i>vuestro</i>	<i>vuestros</i>	your
	fem.	<i>vuestra</i>	<i>vuestras</i>	(familiar)

Vuestro is not used in Latin America and is replaced by *su*. See 8.6 for discussion of Latin-American usage.

8.2.2 Long forms of possessives

All are marked for number and gender:

Personal pronoun	Masculine	Feminine	
<i>yo</i>	<i>mío/míos</i>	<i>mía/mías</i>	mine
<i>tú/vos</i>	<i>tuyo/tuyos</i>	<i>tuya/tuyas</i>	yours
<i>él/ella</i>	<i>suyo/suyos</i>	<i>suya/suyas</i>	his/hers
<i>usted</i>	<i>suyo/suyos</i>	<i>suya/suyas</i>	yours
<i>nosotros/nosotras</i>	<i>nuestro/nuestros</i>	<i>nuestra/nuestras</i>	ours
<i>vosotros/vosotras</i>	<i>vuestro/vuestros</i>	<i>vuestra/vuestras</i>	yours
<i>ellos/ellas</i>	<i>suyo/suyos</i>	<i>suya/suyas</i>	theirs
<i>ustedes</i>	<i>suyo/suyos</i>	<i>suya/suyas</i>	yours

Note

Vuestro is not used in Latin America and is replaced by *suyo*. See 8.6 for discussion of Latin-American usage.

8.3 Use of the short form of possessives

8.3.1 Basic uses

This is straightforward provided the rules of agreement are mastered: the possessive agrees in number with the thing possessed and *nuestro* and *vuestro* agree in gender as well:

<i>mi padre/mis padres</i>	my father/my parents
<i>mi madre/mis flores</i>	my mother/my flowers
<i>¿Dónde está tu coche?</i>	Where's your car?
<i>¿Dónde están tus zapatos?</i>	Where are your shoes?
<i>Me fio de su amigo</i>	I trust his/her/your friend
<i>Me fio de sus amigos</i>	I trust his/her/your friends
<i>nuestro dinero/nuestra dignidad</i>	our money/our dignity
<i>vuestra casa/vuestras casas</i>	your house/your houses
<i>Si ustedes quieren dejar sus cosas aquí . . .</i>	If you want to leave your/his/her/their things here . . .
<i>Si ellos no quieren dejarnos su cortacésped . . .</i>	If they don't want to lend us their lawnmower . . .

8.3.2 Possessives with more than one noun

If a possessive refers to more than one noun, Spanish differs from English in that the possessives are deleted only if the following nouns are felt to refer to the same or aspects of the same thing.

One says *mi padre y mi madre* 'my father and mother' (different people) but *mi amigo y colega* 'my friend and colleague' (same person), *su paciencia y valor* 'his patience and courage' (aspects of a single virtue), *nuestros cuentos y novelas* 'our short stories and novels' (aspects of a single *œuvre*).

8.3.3 Possessives in military usage

In military circles, possessives are used to address officers: *Sí, mi general* 'Yes, General', *No, mi coronel* 'No, Colonel'.

8.3.4 Definite article instead of possessives

Spanish uses possessive adjectives much more sparingly than English and French, and frequently replaces them by the definite article.

A sentence like *Sacó su pañuelo de su bolso* 'He took his handkerchief out of his pocket', although grammatically correct, sounds unnatural: *Sacó el pañuelo del bolso* (if the pocket is someone else's) or *Se sacó el pañuelo del bolso* (from his own pocket) are much more idiomatic. The Academy's *Esbozo...*, 3.10.9a., remarks that sentences like *Pase sus vacaciones en la playa de X*, 'Spend your holidays/vacation on the beach at X' for *Pase las vacaciones...* have a foreign ring to them.

Possessive adjectives are replaced by the definite article:

(a) If context makes it clear that the thing possessed belongs to the speaker or to the person who is the focus of the sentence. Compare *He dejado el coche en el garaje* 'I've left my/the car in my/the garage' and *He dejado tu coche en miel garaje* 'I've left your car in my garage'.

Use of the definite article is normal with parts of the body, clothing and other intimate possessions, especially articles of which one normally has only one, e.g. wrist-watch, purse, wallet/notebook, pen, pencil, glasses, etc.

Examples:

*Metí . . . en una bolsa de playa el
bronceador, las toallas, la radio portátil, el
libro que estoy leyendo, dos camisetas, el
monedero . . .* (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain)¹
Junté las manos y bajé la cabeza
(C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue)
Cierre la boca
Perdió la vida
*Siempre la recuerdo con las uñas pintadas de
azul*
Tengo los ojos azules

I put the sun-tan lotion, the towels, the
portable radio, the book I'm reading, two
T-shirts, my purse . . . in a beach-bag

I joined my hands and bowed my head

Shut your mouth

She lost her life

I always remember her with her nails
painted blue

My eyes are blue/I've got blue eyes

(b) When the thing possessed belongs to the person indicated by an indirect object pronoun. Compare *He dejado tu coche en el garaje* 'I've left your car in my/the garage' and *Te he dejado el coche en el garaje* 'I've left your car in the garage (for you)'. **Te he dejado tu coche . . .* is incorrect.

Ricardo se aflojó la corbata
Bébetelo el café
Arréglate el pelo
Les robaron el coche
*Vio que ella se ponía las manos sobre la cara
como si le dolieran las sienes* (J.L. Borges,
Argentina)

Richard loosened his (own) tie

Drink your coffee

Tidy your hair

They stole their/your car

He saw her putting her hands over her
face as though she had a pain in her
temples

However, when the thing possessed is emphasized or particularized by context, by an adjective or by other words, or whenever ambiguity must be avoided, the possessive adjective usually reappears:

¹ This shows how Spanish is often content to let the meaning of a noun clarify the identity of the possessor. *El monedero* is here certainly 'my purse' since the writer is a woman, but, as far as one can tell from the context, the other items preceded by the definite article belong jointly to her and her husband.

<i>Que el Pelicano se abre el pecho y alimenta con su propia sangre a los hijos es la versión común de la fábula</i> (J.L. Borges, Argentina: *la propia sangre is not possible)	That the pelican tears open its breast and feeds its children with its own blood is the common version of the fable
<i>Vi sus ojos grandes, fatigados, sonrientes y como lacrimosos</i> (F. Umbral, Spain)	I saw her eyes, big, tired, smiling and seemingly tearful
<i>Acerqué mi cabeza a la suya</i> (C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue; contrast)	I moved my head close to his
<i>X deja sus manos suaves y perfumadas</i> (or <i>le deja las manos . . .</i>)	X leaves your hands soft and perfumed
<i>Toco tus labios . . .</i> (popular song)	I touch your lips . . .

Notes

(i) Use of the definite article plays down the importance of the thing possessed. *Te toco los labios* sounds accidental or matter-of-fact. A mother says *Dame la mano, que vamos a cruzar la calle* 'Hold my hand, we're going to cross the road', an old-fashioned lover might say *Dame tu mano y te haré feliz* 'Give me your hand (i.e. 'in marriage') and I will make you happy'.

For the same reason, one does not, in polite speech, use the definite article when the thing possessed is a human being: *¡Cuánto echo de menos a mis hijas!* 'I miss my daughters so much!' *Siempre voy de vacaciones con mi mujer/mi novia* (?*con la mujer/la novia* is either humorous or popular, cf. British 'with the wife') 'I always go on holiday/vacation with my wife/girlfriend'.

(ii) As mentioned above, the possessive adjective must be used when the object possessed is the subject of a verb, unless an indirect object pronoun identifies the possessor: *Su cabeza se destacaba contra el cielo* 'His head stood out against the sky', *Sus ojos parecían cansados* 'Her eyes seemed tired', but *Se le cae el pelo* 'His hair's falling out', *Le dolían las piernas* 'Her/his legs hurt'.

(iii) In Latin America possessive adjectives are often used in combination with *le/les*: *Les pintamos su casa* (street sign, Oaxaca, Mexico) 'We'll paint your house for you', *Me duele mi cabeza* (popular colloquial Mexican) 'My head aches', standard Spanish *Me duele la cabeza*.

8.4 Long or pronominal forms of the possessives

8.4.1 Use of the long or pronominal forms of the possessive

(a) To translate English '. . . of mine/yours/his/ours', etc.:

<i>un amigo mío</i>	a friend of mine
<i>un poema muy malo mío</i> (interview in <i>Granma</i> , Cuba; Spain <i>un poema mío muy malo</i>)	a very bad poem of mine
<i>un pariente vuestro</i>	a relation of yours
<i>Antonio ha vuelto a hacer una de las suyas</i>	Antonio's up to his usual tricks again (lit. 'a trick of his')
<i>una actitud muy suya</i>	a very typical attitude of his/hers/ yours/theirs
<i>algo mío</i>	something of mine
<i>nada nuestro</i>	nothing of ours

(b) As a literary, rather stilted variation of the usual possessive:

<i>en mi novela/en la novela mía</i>	in my novel/in this novel of mine
<i>nuestro pan/el pan nuestro de cada día</i>	our daily bread

(c) In Spain, in formulas of address:

Bueno, hijo mío/hija mía, me voy Well, dear, I'm off

(Lit. 'my son'/'my daughter', a term of endearment used between friends)

Latin-American Spanish says *mi hijo, mi hija*, etc.

(d) To translate the pronouns 'mine', 'yours' (see the following section for the use of the definite article in this construction):

Este garabato es tuyo This scrawl is yours
Este/Éste es el vuestro, ¿verdad? This one is yours, isn't it?

Note

The long forms are used in a number of set phrases: *de nuestra parte/de parte nuestra* 'for our part', *a pesar mío/suyo* 'despite me/him', *a costa mía* 'at my cost', *en torno suyo* 'around him/her/them/you', *a propuesta suya* 'at his suggestion', *muy señor mío* 'Dear Sir' (in letters).

8.4.2 Definite article with the long forms

The definite article is obligatory in the following cases:

(a) After prepositions. Compare *¿De quién es el coche? Mío* 'Whose car is it? Mine' and *¿En qué coche vamos? En el mío* 'Which car are we going in? In mine'.

Further examples:

No hablo del tuyo sino del nuestro I'm not talking about yours but ours
A tu primo sí le/lo conozco, pero no al suyo I know your cousin, but not his/hers

(b) When the pronoun is the subject or object of a verb (even though the verb may be deleted):

Coge el mío Take mine
Tu padre te deja salir, el mío no Your father lets you go out, mine doesn't
Los dos vídeos son buenos, pero el nuestro es mejor The two videos are good but ours is better
Qué vida tan triste la suya What a sad life his/hers/yours/theirs is

(c) After *ser* 'to be', omission of the article stresses actual possession. Thus one would say *Esta casa es mía* 'This house is mine' (it is my property or I live in it), but in an office where there are several telephones one would say *Ese teléfono que suena es el tuyo* 'That phone that's ringing is yours' (i.e. the one you use, not your property):

Compare

Este libro es mío This book belongs to me
La culpa es tuya It's your fault
la casa de Jeremiah Saint-Amour, que desde ahora era suya (G. García Márquez, Colombia)
 and

¿Ves estas tres camas? Esta/ésta es la mía, esa/ésa es la tuya y aquella/aquélla es la de Rafael (implies use, not possession) Do you see these three beds? This is mine, that's yours and that one's Rafael's

8.4.3 The neuter article with *lo mío, lo suyo, etc.*

The neuter form of the possessive has various meanings:

<i>Mi marido sabe lo nuestro</i>	My husband knows about us
<i>Ahora estás en lo tuyo</i>	Now you're in your element
<i>Lo vuestro es alucinante</i>	What happened to you is mind-boggling

See Chapter 7 for more details about neuter forms.

8.5 Replacement of possessive by *de* + pronoun

In some cases a possessive can optionally be replaced by *de* + a pronoun.

This happens:

(a) When it is necessary to clarify the meaning of *su/suyo*, which can have six translations: 'his', 'her', 'its', 'your' (*usted*), 'their', 'your' (*ustedes*).

Context nearly always makes the meaning clear, but ownership may be stressed or ambiguities removed by using *de él/ella, de usted, de ellos/ellas, de ustedes: los paraguas de ustedes* 'your (plural) umbrellas', *la camisa de él* 'his shirt'.

In Spain, *su* is assumed out of context to be third-person, so that *de usted/ustedes* may need to be added to emphasize the meaning 'your'. (For Latin-American usage, see 8.6)

The possibility of ambiguity is illustrated by the question 'Is this handkerchief yours or hers?', which one would probably say *¿Este pañuelo es de usted o de ella?* whereas *¿Este pañuelo es suyo?* 'Is this handkerchief yours?' is clear if no one else is present. Examples: *Conozco a la madre de él* 'I know his mother', *¿Este sombrero es de ella?* 'Is this hat hers?'

(b) When *de* means 'from' or 'about' and not 'of':

<i>Hace tiempo que no tengo noticias vuestras/de vosotros</i>	It's been some time since I've had news about you
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8.6 Possessives: Latin-American usage

Latin-American usage differs from European in a number of ways:

(a) Possessives in areas of *voseo*

Tu/tuyo are the forms corresponding to *vos* in *voseo* areas of Latin America: cf. *Vos tenés tu birome* (Argentina, *la birome* is feminine) 'You've got your ballpoint pen'; Spain *Tú tienes tu bolígrafo*.

(b) Possessives corresponding to *usted/ustedes* and to third-person pronouns

Vuestro is not used in Latin America, except in liturgical and other ceremonial language; it is replaced by *ustedes*.² *Su/sus* is therefore the only second-person possessive form and is used for both formal and informal address.

(c) In Latin America *su/suyo* is assumed, out of context, to mean *de usted/de ustedes* 'of you'. Third-person possession may be represented in everyday

² *Vuestro* is, however, found as a polite plural possessive in Argentine business correspondence: . . . *dada la recomposición de relaciones entre la Argentina y vuestro país* ' . . . given the re-establishment of relations between Argentina and your country' (from a business letter sent to England).

speech by the following construction: *de él* 'his/its' (masc.), *de ella* 'her/its' (fem.), *de ellos* 'their' (masc.), *de ellas* 'their' (fem.): *¿Quieres que vayamos al cuarto de él a ver si está?* (Costa Rican dialogue, quoted Kany, 69) 'Do you want to go to his room to see if he's there?'

(d) *De nosotros* for *nuestro* is also common in Latin-American speech: *La casa de nosotros está en la esquina* (Colombian informant, standard Spanish *nuestra casa*) 'Our house is on the corner', —*¿A quién se lo entregó?* —*Al jefe de nosotros* (*Vindicación de Cuba*, Cuba) "'Who did you hand it over to?" "To our boss"', (standard Spanish *nuestro jefe*).

8.7 Possessives after prepositions and adverbs

A common construction in colloquial Latin-American Spanish, also found in popular speech in Spain, is the use of possessive pronoun forms after prepositions followed by *de*, and after some adverbs: *?detrás mío = detrás de mí* 'behind me', and even, in sub-standard speech, *?Entró antes mío* 'He went in before me', for *Entró antes que yo*.

This usage is so deep-rooted in Argentina that it is found in the best writers, but it is considered colloquial in other Latin-American countries and incorrect in Spain and Mexico:

Adentro mío yo soy igual que todos los reaccionarios (M. Puig, Argentina, dialogue; Spain *dentro de mí* or *por dentro*)
Quiero estar cerca tuyo (ibid., Spain *cerca de ti*)
No lo consiguió por lo intimidado que estaba en mi delante (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue; Spain *delante de mí*)

Inside (me) I'm the same as all the reactionaries

I want to be near you

He was so intimidated in my presence that he didn't manage it

and also (the bracketed forms are used in standard Spanish):

?alrededor mío (*a mi alrededor*³/*alrededor de mí*)
?encima mía (*encima de mí*)
?enfrente suyo (*enfrente de él/ella/usted/ustedes/ellos/ellas*)
?en su delante (*delante de él/ella*, etc.)
?aparte suyo (*aparte de él/ella*, etc.)
?fuera suyo (*fuera de él/ella*, etc.)

around me

above/over me

opposite him/her/you/them

in front of him, etc.

apart from him/her, etc.

apart from him/her, etc.

Foreign students should avoid this construction. However, *en torno nuestro* (literary) 'around us' is considered correct.

Note

Both *contra mí/ti* and *en contra mía/tuya*, 'against me/you', etc. are correct, but there is a tendency to make the possessive precede in Latin America and this usage seems to be spreading to Spain:

Está en mi contra (Peanuts, Argentina)
El hecho de que el teléfono se hubiera puesto en mi contra . . . (S. Puértolas, Spain)

He/she/it is against me

The fact that the phone had turned against me

A mi alrededor is the usual form in Spain.

³ *A mi alrededor* is the usual form in Spain.

9

Miscellaneous adjectives and pronouns

Many of the words discussed in this chapter are of problematic classification and have multiple uses as adjectives, pronouns or adverbs. For easy reference they are, where possible, discussed under a single heading.

9.1 Ajeno: adjective, marked for number and gender

A rather literary word meaning 'someone else's': *el dolor ajeno* (*el dolor de otros*) 'other people's sorrow', *en casa ajena* (*en casa de otro*) 'in another person's house', *Se preocupa demasiado por lo ajeno* 'He concerns himself too much with other people's business'.

It is not used in this meaning after *ser*:

Esta agenda es de otro

This is someone else's diary

Note

Ajeno often translates 'a stranger to', 'remote from': *Éstos/Estos son problemas ajenos a mi responsabilidad* 'These are problems outside my responsibility', . . . *una mujer adulta pero atractiva que tomaba el sol tumbada y ajena, aparentemente, a todo* (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain) '. . . an adult but attractive woman who was lying there sun-bathing and apparently oblivious to everything'.

9.2 Algo: invariable pronoun/adverb

The usual equivalent of 'something' or, in questions or after *poco* and a few other words that form 'pseudo-negative' sentences (discussed at 23.4), 'anything' (French *quelquechose*):

Aquí hay algo que no me suena

There's something here that doesn't sound right to me

¿Ves algo?

Can you see anything?

Serán pocos los que hayan traído algo

There probably won't be many who have brought anything

Adverbially it means 'rather', 'somewhat', though *un poco*, *un tanto* or *más bien* are equally common in speech:

Es algo complicado explicarlo

It's rather complicated to explain

Te has apartado algo del asunto

You've rather wandered off the subject

Notes

(i) *Algo así*, *algo así como* are translations of 'something like . . .': *Pesa algo así como siete kilos* 'It weighs around 7 kilos', *Se llama Nicanora, o algo así* 'She's called Nicanora, or something like that'.

(ii) In negative sentences *nada* translates 'anything': *No sabe nada* 'He doesn't know anything', *Yo no sé dónde está nada en esta casa* 'I don't know where anything is in this house'.

(iii) The English question-opener 'Do you know something . . .?' must be translated *¿Sabes una cosa?. ¿Sabes algo?* means 'Do you know anything?'.

9.3 *Alguien*: invariable pronoun

'Someone'/'somebody'. It also translates 'anyone'/'anybody' in questions (see 23.4.) It is not marked for gender.

Ha venido alguien a cobrar el recibo de la luz

Someone's come to take the money for the electricity bill

¿Conoces a alguien que pueda darme un presupuesto para reparar el coche?

Do you know anyone who could give me an estimate for mending my car?

Notes

(i) **Alguien de los estudiantes*, **alguien de ellos* are rejected by grammarians in favour of *alguno de los estudiantes*, *alguno de (entre) ellos*, although *alguien de entre ustedes* is accepted by some authorities: *Si alguien de entre ustedes/alguno de ustedes lo sabe, que lo diga* 'If someone among you/any of you knows, say so'.

Occasionally *alguien de* is necessary since, unlike *alguno*, it does not indicate gender: *Yo creo que alude a alguien de esta casa* 'I think he's alluding to someone in this house'.

(ii) María Moliner notes that *?darle una cosa a alguien que él no desea* offends the ear since *alguien* is too vague for a specifically masculine pronoun: *darle una cosa a alguien que no lo desea* 'to give something to someone who doesn't want it'.

(iii) 'Give it to someone else' is *Dáselo a algún otro/alguno otro/alguno otra persona*. **Alguien otro* is not Spanish.

(iv) *Uno* is sometimes colloquially used for 'someone' when gender is an important part of the message (for other uses of *uno* as a pronoun see 28.7.1): *Se ha peleado con uno en la calle* 'He's had a fight with some man in the street', *Se casó con una de Valencia* 'He married some girl from Valencia'.

9.4 *Algún, alguno, algunos; alguna, algunas*: adjective/pronoun marked for number and gender

9.4.1 General uses of *alguno*

The appropriate form of *alguno* may be used either as an adjective or (except for the short form *algún*) as a pronoun.

(a) As an adjective:

The usual translation is 'some', (French *quelque*). It is shortened to *algún* before a singular masculine noun or noun phrase: *algún día* 'some day', *algún remoto rincón de Extremadura* 'some remote corner of Extremadura', but *alguna región* 'some region'.

Algún is also common in spoken Spanish immediately before feminine nouns beginning with a stressed *a-* or *ha-*: *algún alma perdida* 'some lost soul', *algún arma defensiva* 'some defensive weapon'; but *alguna* should be used in writing.

In the singular, *alguno* and *uno* are often interchangeable, but *alguno* often means 'one or maybe more' and is roughly equivalent to 'one or another', 'some or other'. (For the difference between *unos* and *algunos*, see 9.4.2):

Tienes que prometerme que si algún/un día te cansas me lo dirás en seguida
Sólo se veía por las desiertas playas algún turista extranjero

You must promise me that if some day you get tired, you'll tell me straight away
 All one could see along the deserted beaches was the occasional foreign tourist

—¿Tiene usted algún manual de programación?

'Do you have any programming manuals?'

—Sí, alguno hay

'Yes, there may be one.'

Note

In formal style, *alguno* may follow a noun, in which case it is an emphatic equivalent of *ninguno*, 'none', 'no . . . at all': *No cultivaba forma alguna de contacto con el pueblo* (J. Marsé, Spain) 'He cultivated absolutely no kind of contact with the common people', *En modo alguno entraba en mis propósitos ingresar en el ejército* 'In no way at all was it part of my plans to join the army', . . . *o mejor una lista de palabras que no tuviera orden alguno* (G. Cabrera Infante, Cuba, dialogue) '. . . or better a list of words with no order at all'.

(b) Alguno as a pronoun:

Se lo habrá llevado alguna de las vendedoras

One of the salesgirls must have taken it away

—¿Has recibido cartas de tu familia?

'Have you had any letters from your family?'

—Bueno, alguna, sí

'Well, one or two, yes'

In the plural, 'some' or 'a few' are the usual translations: *Con algunos de tercero vas a tener que hacer ejercicios de verbos irregulares* 'You're going to have to do irregular verb exercises with some of the third year'.

Notes

(i) When the singular of *alguno* is combined with a second-person pronoun, the verb agrees optionally with the pronoun or with the third person, although the latter is more usual: *si alguno de vosotros lo sabéis/lo sabe* 'if any of you know(s) it'.

In the plural, agreement is always with the pronoun: *algunas de vosotras lo sabéis* 'some of you women know'. This is also true of the first-person plural: *Algunas de nosotras generalmente caminamos despacio* (*La Jornada*, Mexico) 'Some of us women generally walk slowly'.

(ii) 'Some' (and 'any') has no visible equivalent in Spanish when it precedes a partitive noun, i.e. a noun that denotes only part of what it refers to, as in 'Give me some water' *Dame agua*, 'You haven't bought any pins' *No has comprado alfileres*.

In some cases *un poco* or *ninguno* may be appropriate translations of 'some'. 'Any' in the sense of 'it doesn't matter which' is *cualquiera* (see 9.8): *¿Tiene usted pan integral?* 'Have you got any wholemeal bread?', *¿Chuletas de ternera?* *No tenemos* 'Veal chops? We haven't got any', *No tenemos ninguno/ninguna* 'We haven't got a single one' (masc.).

(iii) When *alguno* is the object, direct or indirect, and is placed before the verb for purposes of focus, agreement is governed by the number of an accompanying noun or pronoun: *A alguno de vosotros os quisiera ver yo en un lío como éste/este* 'I'd like to see one of you in a mess like this', *A alguno de ellos les quiere dar el premio* 'It's one of them that he wants to give the prize to'.

9.4.2 Unos and algunos contrasted

English speakers often have difficulty in differentiating these two plural words.

Unos has various meanings discussed at 3.4.

(a) *Algunos* . . . *otros* and *unos* . . . *otros*

The two words are interchangeable when accompanied by *otros/otras*:

<i>Algunos/Unos vinieron, otros no</i>	Some came, others didn't
<i>Algunos/Unos días estoy de mal humor, otros no</i>	Some days I'm in a bad mood, others I'm not

(b) Only *algunos* is possible in the phrase *algunos de*: *salí a cenar con algunos de los alumnos* 'I went out to dinner with some of the students'. *Algunos* is also used when no contrast is intended: *Algunos mexicanos hablan tres idiomas* 'Some Mexicans speak three languages', *Algunos días estoy de mal humor* 'Some days I'm in a bad mood'.

(c) *Unos* 'some' and *unos cuantos* 'a few' can both be used when no specific reference to quantity is intended: *Tráeme unas (cuantas) patatas* 'Bring me a few/some/a couple of potatoes', *Esta tarde vinieron unos (cuantos) amigos* 'Some/a few friends came this afternoon', *He traído unas (cuantas) cerezas* 'I've brought some/a few cherries'. However, sentences like *Salí anoche con unos amigos de Barcelona* 'I went out last night with some friends from Barcelona' and . . . *con unos cuantos amigos de Barcelona* '. . . with a few friends from Barcelona' may mean slightly different things, as they do in English.

(d) *Algunos/unos cuantos* are interchangeable in the meaning of 'a few' when they do not appear before a noun: —*¿Tienes monedas de cinco pesetas?* —*Algunas/unas cuantas* "'Have you got any 5-pesetas coins?" "A few."'

9.5 *Ambos*: adjective marked for number and gender

'Both', though it is rather literary and *los/las dos* usually replaces it in speech.

<i>en ambos/los dos casos</i>	in both cases
<i>¿Cuál de los dos es correcto? Ambos/Los dos</i>	Which of the two is correct? Both

9.6 *Cada*: invariable

'Each', 'every'. *Cada* always precedes the noun:

<i>Cada loco con su tema</i>	'Each to his own' (lit. 'every madman with his obsession')
<i>un libro por cada tres alumnos</i>	one book for every three students
<i>No puedes estar molestando a la gente cada dos por tres</i>	You can't keep bothering people every two minutes

Notes

(i) *Cada vez más/menos* usually translate 'more and more' and 'less and less': *Es cada vez más complicado* 'It gets more and more complicated', *Era cada vez menos generosa* 'She was less and less generous'.

(ii) In familiar speech, *cada* roughly means 'all sorts of . . .': *Dice cada tontería* 'The nonsense he talks . . .', *Hay cada ladrón por ahí* 'There are all sorts of thieves around there', *¡Me hace usted cada pregunta!* (S. Pitul, Mexico, dialogue) 'The questions you ask me!'.

(iii) 'Each one', 'each person': *Que cada uno* (or *cada cual/cada quien*) *haga la lectura que le parezca conveniente* 'Let each person read it as it suits him/her'.

(iv) *?Me baño cada día* or *?voy cada mañana* for . . . *todos los días*, . . . *todas las mañanas* are said to be spreading, but are rejected by careful speakers.

9.7 Cierta: adjective, marked for number and gender

'Certain' i.e. 'specific'. Used thus it precedes the noun:

en ciertos casos
cierto alemán
en cierta novela suya

in certain cases
a certain German
in a certain novel of his

Determinado is a more formal synonym: *En determinados trenes existe un servicio de camareros* 'On certain trains waiter service is provided'.

Notes

(i) *Un cierto/una cierta* for 'a certain' are sometimes condemned as Gallicisms or Anglicisms, but are very common in all styles. *Un cierto* is found before partitive nouns – *Yo era consciente de (una) cierta tendencia suya a exagerar* 'I was aware of a certain tendency of his to exaggerate' – and as a colloquial alternative to *un tal*: *Se casó con un cierto Dionisio de México* 'She married a certain Dionisio from Mexico'.

(ii) Placed after the noun *cierto* means 'fixed'/'accurate': *Hemos tenido noticias ciertas de otro enfrentamiento en la frontera* 'We have received accurate reports of another frontier clash'.

9.8 Cualquier, cualquiera, cualesquiera: adjective/pronoun, marked for number

As an adjective 'any'; as a pronoun 'anybody'/'any one' (French *n'importe quel*).

(a) As an adjective:

Before any noun or noun phrase, the *a* of *cualquiera* (but not usually of *cualesquiera*), is dropped: *en cualquier momento* 'at any moment', *cualquier mujer* 'any woman', *en cualquier triste pueblo andino* 'in any wretched village of the Andes'.

However, the plural adjective *cualesquiera* is nowadays normally expressed by the singular since the meaning is almost the same: *cualquier mujer que no simpatice con el feminismo . . .* 'any woman who doesn't/any women who don't sympathize with feminism . . .'.

Cualquier(a) normally precedes the noun. The idea of random choice is strengthened if it is put after the noun, cf. English 'any at all'. When used thus of people the effect is often pejorative, as is the English 'any old':

Vamos a pasear por una calle cualquiera
Su esposa no es una mujer cualquiera

Let's just walk down any street
His wife isn't just any woman (i.e. she is rather special)

Note

Cualquiera before a feminine noun is an occasional and doubtful colloquial variant, cf. *?de cualquiera manera* (dialogue in C. Fuentes, Mexico), *?y más malvados que cualquiera otra tribu* (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue) 'and more wicked than any other tribe'. It is, however, attested in Ortega y Gasset, Valera and a few other pre-mid 20th-century stylists.

(b) As a pronoun:

The final *-a* is always retained. The plural *cualesquiera* is hardly used in speech and is disappearing even in writing:

Puede usted elegir cualquiera de estos tres modelos

You can choose any one of these three models

Cualquiera diría que eres un millonario

Anybody would think you're a millionaire

Eso lo sabe cualquiera

Anyone knows that

Se les garantiza plaza escolar a sus hijos cualquiera que sean sus estudios (El País – singular for plural)

Their children are guaranteed schoolplaces, whatever their studies (i.e. whatever they have studied)

Cualesquiera que sean las dificultades, cualesquiera que sean los desafíos en el camino de la construcción del comunismo . . . (Fidel Castro, speech)

Whatever the difficulties, whatever the challenges along the path to the building of Communism . . .

9.9 **Demasiado: adjective marked for number and gender, or invariable adverb**

As an adjective 'too many'/'too much'; as an adverb 'too', 'too well'.

(a) Used as an adjective, it must agree in number and gender:

No (le) conviene al trigo que caiga demasiada lluvia

It isn't good for the wheat for too much rain to fall

Esto ha sucedido en demasiados casos

This has happened in too many cases

Llévate un poco de carne – has traído demasiada

Take away a bit of meat – you've brought too much

Has traído demasiados pocos tornillos (demasiado is treated as an adjective before poco)

You've brought too few screws

Nowadays *demasiado* is always placed before the noun.

(b) As an adverb (invariable in form):

Tú hablas demasiado

You talk too much

A ése/ese me lo conozco demasiado

I know him only too well

9.10 **Medio**

In standard Peninsular usage this word functions as an adverb (invariable in form) or as an adjective (inflected for number and gender), both meaning 'half':

Están medio borrachos

They're half drunk

La recogieron medio muerta

They picked her up half dead

media pinta/media luna

half a pint/half moon

media hora

half an hour

In Latin America is often used to mean 'rather', 'pretty' as in *Es medio linda* 'She's rather attractive'/'pretty good-looking', *Son medio tontos* 'They're pretty stupid'.

In Galicia and throughout Latin America there is a widespread colloquial tendency to make the adverb agree in gender: *Ella es media loca* 'She's half crazy', for *medio loca*, *Es media chiquita la casa* (Spain *Es bastante pequeña*) 'The house is pretty small', *Llegó media desilusionada* (popular Mexican, quoted Kany, 55) 'She arrived pretty disillusioned'.

9.11 Mismo (and Latin-American variants): adjective, marked for gender and number

(a) 'The same'

When it means 'the same' it is always placed before any noun or noun phrase that it qualifies:

Lleváis la misma blusa
Estos dos casos son el mismo

You're wearing the same blouse
These two cases are the same (i.e. identical)

Estos dos son los mismos
—¿Es usted don Francisco? —*El mismo*

These two are the same (i.e. as before)
'Are you Don Francisco?' 'I am indeed'
(lit. 'the same')

Notes

(i) *Lo mismo* may mean *la misma cosa*, or it may be adverbial. *Lo mismo* is heard in familiar European Spanish with the meaning 'perhaps': *Como me vuelvan a decir lo mismo/la misma cosa . . .* 'If they say the same thing to me again . . .', *No nos divertimos lo mismo que si hubieras estado tú* 'We didn't have such a good time as we would have if you'd been there', *Lo mismo te da una propina* 'Maybe he'll give you a tip'.

**Lo mismo como* is substandard for *lo mismo que*.

(ii) The following should be noted: *Esa casa es lo mismo que (igual que) aquella/aquella* 'That house is the same as that other one' (i.e. the same is true of it), *Esa casa es la misma que compró Agustín* 'That house is the same one that Agustín bought'.

(b) Placed either before or after a noun, but always after a pronoun, *mismo* means 'selfsame'/'very'/'right':

Vivo en Madrid mismo/en el mismo Madrid
Aparca el helicóptero en su mismo jardín/su jardín mismo

I live in Madrid itself
He parks the helicopter right in his garden

If there is danger of ambiguity, *mismo* must be placed after the noun if it means 'very', 'selfsame': *el mismo Papa* 'the Pope himself' or 'the same Pope', *el Papa mismo* = only 'the Pope himself'.

Propio (see 9.14b) means the same as *mismo* in this sense, but it is not used with pronouns.

(c) Placed after a pronoun it adds emphasis e.g. *yo mismo* 'I myself', *ella misma* 'she . . . herself':

—¿Quién construyó el chalet?¹ —*Yo mismo/misma*

'Who built the house?' 'I did myself'

(d) Placed after an adverb or adverbial phrase, *mismo* is itself an adverb and is therefore invariable:

por eso mismo
ahora mismo/ya mismo
aquí mismo

for that very reason
right now/right away
right here

But if the adverbial phrase contains a noun not accompanied by the definite article, *mismo* may or may not agree with it (Seco (1992), 262, recommends agreement):

esta noche mismo/misma
Vino esta mañana mismo/misma

this very night
It came this very morning

¹ *El chalet* (Spain) 'detached house.'

En España mismól/misma no se pudo evitar la llegada del bikini

In Spain itself it was impossible to prevent the arrival of the bikini

However, if the definite article is present, *mismo* is an adjective and must agree in number and gender: *Lo descubrieron en la chimenea misma* 'They found it in the chimney itself'.

Notes

(i) *Mismísimo* is a colloquial emphatic form of *mismo* in sense (b): *El mismísimo presidente le/lo felicitó* 'The President himself congratulated him'.

(ii) Mexican and Central-American spontaneous speech often uses *mero* in contexts under (b): *en la mera (misma) esquina* 'right on the corner', *Lo hizo él mero (él mismo)* 'He did it himself', *ya mero (ahora mismo)* 'right now'.

In various parts of Latin America, from Chile to Mexico, *puro* may be used in the same way: *en la pura cabeza (en la misma cabeza)* 'right on the head', etc. (from Kany, 57ff).²

(iii) *Mismamente* (= *igual*) is rustic or jocular.

9.12 *Mucho* and *poco*: adjectives, marked for number and gender, or invariable adverbs

(a) Adjectival uses:

Mis hijos no me hacen mucho caso

My children don't pay much attention to me

En el patio hay muchos limoneros

There are a lot of lemon trees in the patio

Pon poca pimienta

Don't put much pepper on/in it

Somos muchos/pocos

There are a lot/not many of us

Lo poco gusta, lo mucho cansa

Brevity is the soul of wit (lit. 'little pleases, much tires')

Note

In the following sentences *mucho* and *poco* do not agree with the preceding noun, but refer to the general idea underlying the sentence: *¿Trescientos mil dólares? Es mucho* '300,000 dollars? It's a lot', *¿Mil cajas de ciruelas? Es poco* '1000 boxes of plums? That's not much'. Compare *Mil cajas para cien días son pocas* '1000 boxes for 100 days isn't/aren't a lot' and *Setenta libros por estante son muchos* '70 books to a shelf is/are a lot'.

(b) Adverbial uses:

Estoy añorando mucho mi patria

I'm missing my home country a lot

Sale poco últimamente

He hasn't been out much lately

Por mucho que te quejes . . .

However much you complain . . .

Por poco que lo quieras

However little you want it . . .

No sabes lo poco que me gusta ese hombre

You don't know how little I like that man

Notes

(i) Before *más*, *menos*, *mayor* and *menor*, when these are followed by a noun (present or implied), *mucho* or *poco* are adjectives and must agree in number and gender – a fact that English-speakers are prone to forget: *Tienen muchos más hijos que tú/tienen muchos más que tú* 'They have many more children than you/They have many more than you', *No en balde han transcurrido 27 años, hay mucha más experiencia, mucha más*

² *Puro* may be used adverbially in some Latin-American countries, cf. *a puro Villa* (announcement by a bus-driver in Tabasco, Mexico) '(I'm going) only to Villahermosa', Spain *sólo/solo a . . .* . Also *Había puras mujeres* (colloquial Chilean, informant) 'There were only women there' (Spain *No había más que mujeres*).

madurez (Fidel Castro, Cuba) 'Twenty-seven years have not passed in vain, there is much more experience, much more maturity'.

But before adjectives and adverbs, *mucho* and *poco* are adverbs and invariable in form: *Los problemas eran mucho mayores* 'The problems were much greater'.

For further examples see 5.10.

(ii) *Muy* 'very' can be thought of as a shortened form of *mucho*, used before adjectives and adverbs. The full form therefore reappears when it is used alone: —¿*Es laborioso?* —*Mucho*. "Is he hard-working?" "Very".

(iii) *Poco* negates an adjective: *poco frecuente* = *no frecuente*: *Estoy poco acostumbrado al trabajo manual* 'I'm not used to manual labour', *El argumento es poco convincente* 'The argument is unconvincing', *Es poco más honrado de lo que tú dices* 'He is no more honest than you say'.

Compare *Es un poco más honrado de lo que tú dices* 'He's a bit more honest than you say'.

(iv) 'Very much' = *muchísimo*. *Muy mucho* is archaic or jocular.

(v) *Un poco de* is invariable, but phrases like ?*una poca de sal* 'a bit of salt' are heard in very popular or jocular speech.

9.13 Otro: adjective/pronoun, marked for number and gender

Adjectivally 'other'/'another'; pronominally 'another one'/'others':

Otra persona no te creería
Ponle otro sello (Lat. Am. *estampilla*)
por otra parte . . .
En circunstancias otras que aquellas en que . . .
El que lo hizo fue otro
Hay quienes ven la vida lógica y ordenada, otros la sabemos absurda y confusa
 (G. Cabrera Infante, Cuba, dialogue)

Another person wouldn't believe you
 Put another stamp on it
 on the other hand . . .
 In circumstances other than those in which . . .
 The one who did it was someone else
 There are some who see life as logical and ordered, others of us know it as absurd and confused

Notes

(i) **Un otro* 'another' (French *un autre*, Catalan *un altre*) is not Spanish: *Dame otro* – 'Give me another'.

(ii) The possessives *mi*, *tu*, *su*, *nuestro*, *vuestro* precede *otro*, but other adjectives follow it, although *mucho* may appear in either position: *tu otro pantalón* 'your other trousers', *Sé que estoy manipulada como otra mucha gente* (interview in *Cambio16*, also *mucha otra* . . .) 'I know I'm being manipulated like a lot of other people', . . . *cosa que sólo celebraron Carmen Serdán y otras cuatro maestras* (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue) 'something that only Carmen Serdán and four other women teachers greeted enthusiastically', *en otros pocos casos* (cf. *en pocos otros casos* 'in not many other cases'), 'in a few other cases', *otras dos Coca Colas* 'two more Coca Colas'.

(iii) *Los/las demás* may be a synonym of *los otros/las otras* if the latter means 'the rest'/'the remaining': *el resto de los/los otros/los demás países europeos* 'the other European countries'.

9.14 Propio: adjective, marked for number and gender

(a) Usually it means 'own', as in:

mi propio taxi
tus propias convicciones
Tiene chófer propio
Es suyo propio
Intentar comprender su realidad es comprender mejor la tuya propia (Queen Sofía of Spain, quoted in *El País*)

my own taxi
 your own convictions
 He has his own driver
 It's his own
 Trying to understand their [i.e. artists'] reality is to understand better your own

(b) 'Selfsame', 'very', etc. (same as *mismo* at 9.11b.):

Las tachaduras son del propio autor
Nos dio audiencia el propio obispo

The crossing out is by the author himself
 The Bishop himself granted us an audience

(c) 'Appropriate', 'right', 'peculiar', 'characteristic':

Ese lenguaje no es propio de un diplomático
Es propio de ella llegar tres horas tarde

That language is not suitable for a diplomat
 It's just like her to arrive three hours late

9.15 **Solo: adjective, marked for number and gender; sólo: invariable adverb**

The adjective means 'alone', the adverb means 'only'. The adverb used always to be distinguished by the written accent, but the Academy's *Nuevas normas* of 1959 decree that an accent is now necessary only to avoid ambiguity, so one may legitimately now write *solo tres* or *sólo tres* for 'only three'. Nearly thirty years later most editors still follow the old rules and there is much inconsistency.

Ambiguity is only possible with the masculine singular adjective, e.g. *un hombre solo/un hombre sólo* 'a man alone/only one man' *solo en casa/sólo en casa* 'alone in the house/only at home'. *Solamente* is an unambiguous equivalent of *sólo*.

(a) Adjectival uses:

No renunciaré, aunque todos ustedes dimitan y yo me quede solo
Usted sola no podrá hacerlo

I won't give up, even if all of you resign and I am left alone
 You (fem.) won't be able to manage it alone

El solo anuncio de su llegada ha despertado una avalancha de protestas dos cafés solos
 (cf. *dos cafés sólo*)

The mere announcement of his arrival has aroused an avalanche of protests
 two black coffees
 only two coffees)

(b) Adverbial examples:

Millones de personas disfrutan de la luz eléctrica con sólo/solo accionar un simple conmutador

Millions of people enjoy electric light merely at the press of a switch

Sólo/Solo así se solucionarán estos problemas

Only in this way will these problems be solved

Notes

(i) A negative + *más . . . que* is a common way of translating 'only' (cf. French *ne . . . que . . .*): *No hizo más que reírse* 'All he did was laugh', *No piensa más que en sí misma* 'She only thinks of herself'.

Más que must not be confused with *más de*. The latter is used with numerical values and means 'more than'. See 5.5 for discussion.

(ii) *A solas* strictly means 'alone' (i.e. unaccompanied), and is occasionally required for the sake of clarity, e.g. *Lo solucionó a solas* 'He solved it alone (no one else present)', *Lo solucionó solo* 'He solved it alone' (without help).

A solas cannot be used of inanimate things. In sentences like *Estuvo a solas con sus pensamientos* 'He was alone with his thoughts', it is an elegant, rather poetic alternative to *solo*.

(iii) Translating 'the only . . .', 'the only one . . .', 'his only', etc. *Único* is required if no noun follows: *Él es el único que sabe conducir* 'He's the only one who can drive',

Lo único es que no sé nadar 'The only thing is I can't swim', *Es hijo único* 'He's an only child'.

But *el único/solo ser por quien deseo vivir* 'the only person I want to live for', *Son el único/solo sustento del gobierno* 'They're the government's only support'.

9.16 Tanto: adjective, marked for number and gender; or invariable adverb

For the use of *tanto* and *tan* in comparisons see 5.15.1.

These words basically mean 'so much', 'so many' (French *tant de*):

(a) As an adjective it must agree in number and gender:

Se me fue el santo al cielo de tanto hablar
(adverbially, *de hablar tanto*)

I clean forgot from so much talking (lit. 'my Saint went up to Heaven with so much talking')

Te he advertido tantas veces
No creí que se atrevería a tanto

I've warned you so many times
I didn't think he would be that daring

Cobran un tanto por ciento de comisión

They take a certain percent as commission

(b) As an adverb it is invariable in form:

—*Hay más de tres kilos.* —*¡No tanto!*

There are more than three kilos. Not that much!

Corrió tanto que no podía hablar
Tanto era así que . . . (see note (ii) for *?tan era así. . .*).

He ran so much that he couldn't speak
So much was it so that . . .

Tanto mejor/tanto peor para ellos

All the better/so much the worse for them

La rana es tanto un plato favorito de los franceses como buena presa para las serpientes

The frog is both a favourite dish of the French and a good prey for snakes

Notes

(i) Before adjectives or adverbs, *tan* is required: *Usted ha sido tan acogedor* 'You've been so welcoming', *Se levanta tan de mañana que nadie le/lo ve salir* 'He gets up so early in the morning that no one sees him leave', *Lo hizo tan de pronto* 'He did it so suddenly', *tan a propósito* 'so much on purpose'/'so relevantly', *tan inteligentemente* 'so intelligently'.

Mejor, peor, mayor and *menor* are exceptions: *tanto mejor/peor para usted* 'so much the better/worse for you', *El peligro era tanto mayor debido a la radiactividad* 'The danger was so much greater due to radioactivity'.

(ii) *?Tan es así, ?tan se conocían*, for *tanto es así* or *tanto se conocían*, are considered substandard in Spain but are found in Latin-American speech and writing.

(iii) *Tanto* plus a singular noun is a colloquial expression for 'lots of', 'so many': *Hay tanto ricacho por aquí* 'There are loads of stinking rich people round here'.

(v) *Tanto . . . que* for 'as much as' is not Spanish: *No viaja tanto como tú* 'He doesn't travel as much as you'. For further details on *tanto* in comparisons see 5.15.1.

9.17 Todo: adjective/pronoun, marked for number and gender

'All', 'every', 'the whole of', 'any':

(a) When it is not followed by *un* or *el* it usually means 'every' or 'any':

todo producto alimenticio que contenga colorantes artificiales . . .
todo español sabe que . . .
en todo caso

any food product containing artificial colouring . . .
every Spaniard knows that . . .
in any case

In all these cases *cualquier* could replace *todo*.

(b) With the definite article, possessives or demonstratives, or before proper names it usually translates 'the whole of'/'all':

<i>toda la noche</i>	all night
<i>todos los griegos</i>	all (the) Greeks
<i>todos los cinco</i>	all five of them
<i>Todo aquel febrero no paró de llover</i>	All that February it didn't stop raining
<i>Todo Barcelona habla de ello</i> (See 1.4.7, note, for the gender of <i>todo</i> in this example)	All Barcelona's talking about it

(c) With definite article and periods of time, 'every':

<i>El fontanero</i> (Lat. Am. <i>plomero</i>) <i>viene todos los meses</i>	The plumber comes every/once a month
<i>todos los viernes/años</i>	every Friday/year

Notes

(i) *Cada* must be used if the actions are new ones rather than repetitions, or when the period of time is preceded by a number: *Cada día sale con una chica nueva* 'Every day he goes out with a new girl,' *Cada diez minutos sale con alguna nueva burrada* 'Every ten minutes he comes out with some new nonsense', *tres gotas cada cuatro horas* 'three drops every four hours'.

(ii) Moliner, II, 1330, notes that *al . . .* is more elegant than *todos los . . .* when describing rate or quantity per period of time: *Se fuma cuatro paquetes al día* 'He smokes four packets a day', *Lee un par de novelas a la semana* 'He reads a couple of novels a week', etc.

(iii) *Cuanto* may be used to translate 'absolutely every': *No es cosa de obligar a leer cuanto libro se ha escrito* (E. Sábato, Argentina, interview) 'It's not a question of obliging people to read every book that was ever written'.

Cuanto is not used thus in phrases like *todos los días* 'every day'. *Cuanto* or *todo cuanto* may also translate 'absolutely everything': *Heredó de él una tremenda bronca a (todo) cuanto sonara a autoridad* (L. Sepúlveda, Chile)³ 'He inherited from him a tremendous rage against everything that sounded like authority'.

(d) Pronominally, the singular means 'everything', the plural 'everyone'/'everybody'/'all of them': *Se enfada por todo* 'He gets cross about everything', *Es todo propaganda* 'It's all propaganda'.

—¿Dónde están las fresas?	'Where are the strawberries?'
—Me las he comido todas	'I've eaten them all'

Note

After a neuter *todo* – as after all singular nouns and pronouns – Spanish makes the verb *ser* (and one or two others) agree with a following plural noun: *Todo son mentiras* 'It's all lies', *Con nuestro nuevo plan de ahorros, todo son ventajas* 'With our new savings plan it's all advantages'. See 2.3.3 for further discussion.

(e) Agreement of *todo* should be noted in the following examples:

<i>Su cara era toda pecas</i>	Her face was all freckles
<i>El cielo era todo nubes</i>	The sky was all clouds
<i>Esa niña es toda ojos</i> (from Moliner, II, 1930)	That girl's all eyes

³ *Bronca* means 'row'/'dispute' outside the Southern Cone.

But the adverbial *todo* is not uncommon in this construction: *Estas chuletas son todo hueso* 'These chops are all bone', *Tu amiga es todo sonrisas esta mañana* 'Your friend's all smiles this morning'.

(f) Relative clauses involving *todo*

The following sentences, many inspired by Hammer (1971), 189, illustrate some translation problems:

<i>todos los que dicen eso</i>	all who say that
<i>todo el que diga eso/todo aquel que diga eso</i> (latter is literary)	anyone who says that
<i>Todo lo que escribe es bueno</i>	Everything he writes is good
<i>Cuanto/todo cuanto escribe es bueno</i> (literary)	Everything he writes is good
<i>Este poeta, cuyas palabras todas quedarán grabadas en nuestro corazón . . .</i>	This poet, whose every word will remain engraved on our hearts . . .
<i>El césped, por toda cuya superficie crecían malas hierbas . . .</i>	The lawn, over whose entire surface weeds were growing . . .
<i>Esta ciudad, de la que conozco todas las iglesias . . .</i>	This city, all of whose churches I know . . .
<i>Estas novelas, todas las cuales he leído . . .</i>	These novels, all of which I have read . . .
<i>Estos niños, los padres de todos los cuales yo conozco . . .</i>	These children, all of whose parents I know . . .
<i>Estas páginas, escritas todas ellas en japonés . . .</i>	These pages, all of which are written in Japanese . . .
<i>El palacio, del que no hay habitación que yo no haya visitado . . .</i>	The palace, all of whose rooms I have visited . . .

Notes

(i) *Todo* occasionally follows the noun in flowery styles: *El cielo todo estaba sembrado de estrellas* 'The whole sky was strewn with stars', *El mundo todo le parecía un jardín encantado* 'The whole world seemed to him an enchanted garden'.

(ii) *Todo el mundo* (singular agreement) is a set phrase meaning 'everybody'.

(iii) *Todo* followed by the indefinite article usually translates 'a whole . . .': *Se comió toda una tarta de melocotones* 'He ate a whole peach tart', *Hubo toda una serie de malentendidos* 'There was a whole series of misunderstandings'.

9.18 Varios: adjective, marked for number and gender

(a) 'Several', in which case it normally – but not invariably – precedes the noun:

<i>en varias partes del país</i>	in several parts of the country
<i>Mis motivos son varios</i>	My motives are several

(b) 'Various', 'varied' (usually follows the noun):

<i>flores de colores varios</i>	flowers of various colours
<i>La fauna de esta zona es muy varia/variada</i>	The fauna of this zone is very varied

Note

Translating 'various': *en diversas ocasiones* 'on various occasions', *en diferentes puntos de los Andes* 'in various places in the Andes'.

10

Numerals

Spanish numerals are neither complex nor plagued with exceptions, although this regularity makes the three unexpected forms *quinientos* 500 (*not* **cinco cientos*), *setecientos* 700 (*not* **sietecientos*), and *novcientos* 900 (*not* **nuevecientos*) much easier to forget. Also easily forgotten is the rule that 16-19 and 21-29 are written as one word, whereas the other numbers joined by *y* are not.

10.1 Cardinal numbers

Spanish cardinal numerals are invariable in form, with the important exceptions of *uno* 'one' and *cientos* 'hundreds', which agree in gender with the noun counted.

The ordinal numbers above *décimo* 'tenth' are usually avoided in informal language and are replaced by the corresponding cardinal numbers. See 10.12.2.

0 <i>cero</i>	11 <i>once</i>	22 <i>veintidós</i>	40 <i>cuarenta</i>
1 <i>uno/una</i>	12 <i>doce</i>	23 <i>veintitrés</i>	50 <i>cincuenta</i>
2 <i>dos</i>	13 <i>trece</i>	24 <i>veinticuatro</i>	60 <i>sesenta</i>
3 <i>tres</i>	14 <i>catorce</i>	25 <i>veinticinco</i>	70 <i>setenta</i>
4 <i>cuatro</i>	15 <i>quince</i>	26 <i>veintiséis</i>	80 <i>ochenta</i>
5 <i>cinco</i>	16 <i>dieciséis</i>	27 <i>veintisiete</i>	90 <i>noventa</i>
6 <i>seis</i>	17 <i>diecisiete</i>	28 <i>veintiocho</i>	100 <i>ciento/ciento</i>
7 <i>siete</i>	18 <i>dieciocho</i>	29 <i>veintinueve</i>	101 <i>ciento uno/una</i>
8 <i>ocho</i>	19 <i>diecinueve</i>	30 <i>treinta</i>	102 <i>ciento dos</i>
9 <i>nueve</i>	20 <i>veinte</i>	31 <i>treinta y uno/una</i>	
10 <i>diez</i>	21 <i>veintiuno/a</i>	32 <i>treinta y dos</i>	
185	<i>ciento ochenta y cinco</i>		
200	<i>docientos/doscientas</i>		
205	<i>doscientos cinco/doscientas cinco</i>		
300	<i>trescientos/trescientas</i>		
357	<i>trescientos cincuenta y siete/trescientas cincuenta y siete</i>		
400	<i>cuatrocientos/cuatrocientas</i>		
500	<i>quinientos/quinientas</i>		
600	<i>seiscientos/seiscientas</i>		
700	<i>setecientos/setecientas</i>		
800	<i>ochocientos/ochocientas</i>		
900	<i>novcientos/novecientas</i>		
1000	<i>mil</i>		
1006	<i>mil seis</i> (but see note (iv) for <i>mil y uno/una</i> 1001)		
1107	<i>mil ciento siete</i>		
1998	<i>mil novecientos/as noventa y ocho</i>		
2022	<i>dos mil veintidós</i>		

5000	<i>cinco mil</i>
10.000	<i>diez mil</i>
500.014	<i>quinientos/as mil catorce</i>
936.257	<i>novecientos/as treinta y seis mil doscientos/as cincuenta y siete</i>
1.000.000	<i>un millón</i>
100.000.000	<i>cien millones</i>
\$1.000.000	<i>un millón de dólares</i>
7.678.456	<i>ptas: siete millones seiscientas setenta y ocho mil cuatrocientas cincuenta y seis pesetas</i>
1.000.000.000.000	<i>un billón¹</i>

Notes

(i) 16-19 and 21-29 are rather arbitrarily written as one word, as are 200, 300, 400, 500, 600, 700, 800, 900. Forms like *diez y seis* for *dieciséis* are old-fashioned.

(ii) *Uno* is not used before *ciento* and *mil* except in rare cases of ambiguity: *Hay ciento veinte coches* 'There are 120 cars', *más de mil colegios equipados con televisores en color* 'more than one thousand schools equipped with colour television', but –

<i>trescientos/as un mil ochenta y cuatro</i>	301.084
<i>trescientos/as mil ochenta y cuatro</i>	300.084

(iii) A comma separates decimals: 3,05 = our 3.05, and a point is used to separate thousands: 19.000 *dólares* = \$19,000; but Mexico follows our conventions and Cuba writes 10 000 for ten thousand. Typists often write years with a point, e.g. 1.998, but the best authorities condemn this.

(iv) Seco (1992), 369, notes that *mil y uno* 'a thousand and one' comes from the famous stories *Las mil y una noches* 'A Thousand and One Nights' and is correct only in the vague sense of 'a lot', cf. *Es sólo un ejemplo de los mil y un casos de todos los días* (*El País*, quoted Gerboin and Leroy (1991), 91) 'It's only one example among the thousand and one cases of every day'.

However, the form . . . *y uno* is commonly used in speech after thousands: *mil y una pesetas* '1001 pesetas', *tres mil y un dólares* '3001 dollars'. Theoretically correct forms like *mil una pesetas* are confined to formal writing.

(v) Certain forms ending in *-ón* are used pejoratively to refer to people of a specific age: *un cuarentón* 'a forty-year old man', *un cincuentón* 'a fifty-year old', *una sesentona* 'a sixty-year old woman'.

10.2 Gender of numbers

Numbers, unlike letters of the alphabet, are masculine:

<i>Yo puse un siete, no un nueve</i>	I put a 7, not a 9
<i>un cinco de bastos</i>	a five of clubs
<i>Tú eres el cinco</i>	You're number five

This is also true of *cientos* and *miles* when they are used as nouns (i.e. when they are followed by *de*):

<i>los miles de víctimas</i>	the thousands of victims
<i>los escasos cientos de personas que asistían</i>	the few hundred persons present

Note

In informal styles *miles de* is quite often made to agree with a following feminine noun: *La acumulación de los plaguicidas es un continuo peligro de envenenamiento para las miles de aves* (*La Vanguardia*, Spain) 'The accumulation of pesticides represents (lit.

¹ *Un billón* is a million million – as everywhere except in the English-speaking world.

'is') a continual threat of poisoning for the thousands of birds'. *Los miles de aves* is recommended.

10.3 Agreement of *uno* and the hundreds

Uno and *cientos* (but not *ciento/cien*) must agree in gender with the noun counted – a rule constantly overlooked by foreign students:

<i>un peso/una peseta</i>	one peso/one peseta
<i>veintiuna pesetas</i>	twenty-one pesetas
<i>quinientos dólares</i>	five hundred dollars
<i>setecientas libras</i>	seven hundred pounds
<i>en la página quinientas catorce</i>	on page 514
<i>Yo duermo en la cuatrocientas (habitación omitted)</i>	I'm sleeping in (room) 400

Note

Tens plus a thousand (21,000, 31,000, 41,000, etc.) are problematic. Logically one should say *veintiuna mil pesetas/mujeres* '21,000 pesetas/women' since the nouns are feminine and *mil* is in this case an adjective, not a masculine noun. However, forms like *veintiún mil pesetas*, *treinta y un mil mujeres* '31,000 women', etc., are in fact in general use and most speakers will not accept *veintuna/treinta y una mil*.

With hundreds the expected gender agreement must be used: *doscientas mil pesetas* '200,000 ptas', never **doscientos mil pesetas*.

10.4 Millions

Millón is a masculine noun and is connected by *de* to a following noun or noun phrase:

. . . <i>una inversión global de más de 6.000 millones de pesetas, de los que mil millones se invertirán el próximo año (El País)</i>	. . . an overall investment of more than 6,000 million ptas of which 1,000 million will be invested next year
---	---

Un millón is a collective noun and a following adjective or verb must agree accordingly: *El millón y medio restante fue invertido . . .* 'The remaining million and a half were/was invested . . .'. See 2.3.1 for details.

10.5 *Un* or *uno*?

Uno loses its final vowel before a masculine noun or noun phrase, as does *una* before nouns beginning with stressed *a-* or *ha-*. *Veintiuno* is shortened to *veintiún* in the same contexts:

<i>un tigre, dos tigres, tres tigres</i>	one tiger, two tigers, three tigers (a tongue-twister)
<i>veintiún mil hombres</i>	21,000 men
<i>veintiún mil mujeres</i> (see note to 10.3)	21,000 women
<i>un águila, veintiún armas, treinta y un hachas</i>	one eagle, 21 weapons, 31 axes

In the following examples the final vowel is retained since the numeral does not precede a noun:

<i>No hay más que veintiuno párrafo ciento uno</i>	There are only twenty-one paragraph 101
<i>Inglaterra, país tradicional de los fantasmas, ve uno nuevo por sus calles (Cambio16, Spain)</i>	England, the traditional land of ghosts, is witnessing a new one in its streets

10.6 Cien or ciento?

Ciento is shortened to *cien* before another numeral which it multiplies, or before a noun or noun phrase:

<i>cien mil bolívares</i>	100,000 bolivares
<i>cien millones</i>	100 million
<i>cien buenas razones</i>	100 good reasons

but

<i>ciento once</i>	one hundred and eleven
<i>en la página ciento dieciocho</i>	on page one hundred and eighteen

The old rule (still respected by some purists and by some older speakers in Spain) was that *ciento* should be used when the number stands alone:

— <i>¿Cuántos son?</i> — <i>Ciento</i>	'How many are there?' 'A hundred'
<i>Vendimos más de ciento</i>	We sold over a hundred

But this rule is completely obsolete in Latin America and virtually extinct in Spain:

<i>Yo vivo en el cien</i>	I live in number 100
<i>Pues faltan cien o sobran cincuenta</i> (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)	Well, there are either a hundred missing or fifty too many

However, *ciento* is used in percentages: see 10.7.

10.7 Expression of percentages

Ciento is used with all numbers, although the phrase *cien por cien* 'one hundred per cent' is also found for *ciento por ciento*.

Forms like *cincuenta por cien*, *diez por cien* are heard colloquially in Latin America (and occasionally in Spain), but . . . *por ciento* is used in writing on both continents:

<i>El PCE sólo obtuvo el 8 y pico por ciento de los votos (El País)</i>	The Spanish Communist Party only obtained slightly more than 8 per cent of the votes
. . . <i>el costo de la construcción creció el 0,7 por ciento (La Nación, Argentina)</i>	building costs rose 0.7 per cent
. . . <i>la seguridad, cien por cien, de que los vertidos son inocuos (El País)</i>	. . . the hundred per cent certainty that the material to be dumped is harmless

10.8 Collective numerals

There is a series of collective numerals, cf. our 'score', sometimes used to express approximate quantities:

<i>un par de veces</i>	a couple of times
<i>una decena</i>	ten
<i>una docena</i>	a dozen (used less in Spanish)
<i>una veintena</i>	a score/about twenty
<i>la cuarentena</i>	about forty/quarantine
<i>una cincuentena</i>	about fifty
<i>un centenar</i>	about a hundred
<i>un millar</i>	about a thousand

Notes

(i) *Cuatro* is used colloquially in Spain, Mexico and no doubt elsewhere to mean 'a couple'/'a handful': *No hay más que cuatro gatos* 'There's not a soul about' (lit. '... only four cats about'), *No son más que cuatro desgraciados los que ponen las pegatinas fascistas* 'It's only a handful of wretches who put up fascist stickers'.

(ii) *Centenar* and *millar* are used for expressing rate: *mil dólares el centenar/millar* '1000 dollars the hundred/the thousand' (or, more colloquially, ... *cada cien/por cada cien, cada mil*).

(iii) Like all collective nouns, collective numerals are often treated as singular: *Una veintena de casas se ordenaba formando una calle frente al río* (L. Sepúlveda, Chile) 'A score of houses were laid out to form a street in front of the river'. See 2.3.1 for further remarks on agreement with collective nouns.

10.9 Mathematical expressions

Dos y tres son cinco

Dos por tres son seis

Ocho dividido por dos son cuatro

(sometimes *ocho entre dos* . . .)

Once menos nueve son dos

Tres es la raíz cuadrada de nueve

Nueve es el cuadrado de tres

Forma un cuadrado de diez metros

dos metros cuadrados

Two plus three equals five

Two times three equals six

Eight divided by two equals four

Eleven minus nine equals two

Three is the square root of nine

Nine is three squared

It's 10 metres square

Two square metres

The division sign is a colon, e.g. $3:6 = 0,5$ (*tres dividido por seis son cero coma cinco*) ' $3/6 = 0.5$ '.

10.10 Fractions

$1/2$ *una mitad*

$1/3$ *un tercio*

$2/3$ *dos tercios*

$1/4$ *un cuarto*

$1/5$ *un quinto*

$3/7$ *tres séptimos*

$7/10$ *siete décimos*

For fractions based on larger numbers, the masculine or the feminine of the ordinal form may be used (the feminine form agrees with the word *parte* 'part', deleted):

un centésimo/una centésima

un milésimo/una milésima

un millonésimo/una millonésima

A partir de la primera cienmilésima de segundo, el Universo empieza a cobrar un aspecto conocido (ABC, Spain)

a hundredth

a thousandth

a millionth

After the first one hundred thousandth of a second the Universe begins to take on a familiar appearance

Forms ending in *-avo* are also found in technical and mathematical language: *cuatro quinceavos* 'four fifteenths', *tres cincuentavos* 'three fiftieths'. These forms should not be used as ordinal numbers. See 10.12.2 for discussion.

La tercera parte 'a third', *la quinta parte* 'a fifth', *la décima parte* 'a tenth', etc. are normally used in non-mathematical contexts: *la tercera parte de los accidentes de tráfico* 'a third of traffic accidents'.

10.11 Articles with numbers

Certain common numerical expressions, especially percentages, usually appear with the article. This is particularly true when the numerical value is preceded by a preposition:

<i>Vivo en el cinco</i>	I live in number 5
<i>La inflación ha subido en un tres por ciento</i>	Inflation has risen by 3 per cent
<i>El porcentaje de éxito llega al 70 por ciento</i>	The success rate reaches 70%

But *Ha costado entre tres mil y cinco mil ptas* 'It cost between 3,000 and 5,000 ptas'.

10.12 Ordinal numbers

10.12.1 Ordinals 'first' to 'tenth'

Ordinals agree in number and gender: *el quinto libro/la quinta casa* 'the fifth book'/'the fifth house'. Ordinals 1st-10th are in everyday use, but the cardinals encroach even on them in phrases like *el siglo nueve/noveno* 'the ninth century', *Alfonso diez/décimo* 'Alfonso the tenth', the ordinal being considered more correct:

<i>primer(o)</i>	first	<i>sexto</i>	sixth
<i>segundo</i>	second	<i>séptimo/sétimo</i>	seventh
<i>tercer(o)</i>	third	<i>octavo</i>	eighth
<i>cuarto</i>	fourth	<i>noveno</i>	ninth
<i>quinto</i>	fifth	<i>décimo</i>	tenth

Examples:

<i>el tercer hombre</i>	the third man
<i>Carlos III (tercero)</i>	Charles III
<i>Fernando VII (séptimo)</i>	Ferdinand VII
<i>la tercera vez</i>	the third time
<i>el siglo décimo/diez</i>	the tenth century

Notes

(i) *Primero* and *tercero* lose their final vowel before a masculine singular noun or noun phrase: *el primer récord mundial* 'the first world record', *el tercer gran éxito* 'the third great success'.

(ii) *Séptimo* is often pronounced *sétimo* and the Academy approves of this as an alternative spelling. Most Spanish-speakers do not.

(iii) *Nono* is used for *noveno* when referring to Popes: *Pío nono* 'Pope Pius IX'.

See 32.9 for how to say and write dates.

10.12.2 Ordinal numbers above 'tenth'

The use of special ordinal forms for these numbers is declining, and they are now mainly used only in official or formal language.

Forms in the rightmost column are used for fractions in technical language: *tres doceavos* 'three-twelfths'. They are used as ordinals in Latin America: *la doceava parte de un sexenio* (Carlos Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue) 'one twelfth of six years'. This usage is found occasionally in Spain but it is condemned by connoisseurs of good usage, including Manuel Seco and the *Libro de estilo* of *El País*, despite the fact that the phrase *doceava edición* 'twelfth edition' is seen,

arbitrarily, in well-printed books.

<i>undécimo</i>	eleventh	<i>onceavo</i>
<i>duodécimo</i>	twelfth	<i>doceavo</i>
<i>decimotercero</i> (<i>decimotercer</i> before sing. masc. nouns)	thirteenth	<i>treceavo</i>
<i>decimocuarto</i>	fourteenth	<i>catorceavo</i>
<i>decimoquinto</i>	fifteenth	<i>quinceavo</i>
<i>decimosexto</i>	sixteenth	<i>dieciseisavo</i>
<i>decimoséptimo</i>	seventeenth	<i>diecisieteavo</i>
<i>decimooctavo</i>	eighteenth	<i>dieciochoavo</i>
<i>decimonoveno/decimonono</i>	nineteenth	<i>diecinueveavo</i>
<i>vigésimo</i>	twentieth	<i>veinteavo</i>
<i>vigésimo/a primero/a</i> <i>primerola</i> (<i>vigésimo primer</i> before sing. masc. nouns)	twenty-first	
<i>vigésimo/a quinto/a</i> etc.	twenty-fifth	<i>veinticincoavo</i>
<i>trigésimo</i>	thirtieth	<i>treintavo</i>
<i>trigésimo/a sexto/a</i>	thirty-sixth	
<i>cuadragésimo</i>	fortieth	<i>cuarentavo</i>
<i>quincuagésimo</i>	fiftieth	<i>cincuentavo</i>
<i>sexagésimo</i>	sixtieth	<i>sesentavo</i>
<i>septuagésimo</i>	seventieth	<i>setentavo</i>
<i>octogésimo</i>	eightieth	<i>ochentavo</i>
<i>nonagésimo</i>	ninetieth	<i>noventavo</i>
<i>centésimo</i> (in common use)	hundredth	<i>centavo</i>
<i>ducentésimo</i>	two hundredth	
<i>tricentésimo</i>	three hundredth	
<i>cuadringentésimo</i>	four hundredth	
<i>quingentésimo</i>	five hundredth	
<i>sexcentésimo</i>	six hundredth	
<i>septingentésimo</i>	seven hundredth	
<i>octingentésimo</i>	eight hundredth	
<i>noningentésimo</i>	nine hundredth	
<i>milésimo</i> (in common use)	thousandth	
<i>dosmilésimo</i>	two thousandth	
<i>cuatrocientosmilésimo</i>	four hundred thousandth	
<i>millonésimo</i>	millionth	

Notes

(i) In informal styles, written and spoken, ordinal forms over 'tenth' are either avoided, e.g. *Mañana cumple treinta años* 'Tomorrow's his thirtieth birthday', —¿*En qué capítulo viene?* —*En el trece* ' "What chapter's it in?" "Thirteen" ', or the ordinary ordinal number is used, e.g. *el veinticinco aniversario* 'the twenty-fifth anniversary', *la trescientas cincuenta reunión del comité* 'the 350th meeting of the committee', *El tren de alta velocidad español está a punto de contabilizar su pasajero medio millón* (*El País*) 'The Spanish High Speed Train is about to get (lit. 'to enter into its accounts') its 500,000th passenger'.

(ii) **Decimoprimer*, **decimosegundo*, for *undécimo*, *duodécimo*, are common mistakes in spoken Spanish.

(iii) Forms like *décimo tercero*, *décimo cuarto*, in which both words agree in number and gender, are nowadays old-fashioned. Forms like *vigesimoquinto/a*, *vigemoséptimo/a*, etc. are also increasingly common for 21st to 29th.

10.12.3 Position of ordinals

Like most adjectives, they may follow or precede a noun, occasionally with changes of meaning. They usually precede, but used emphatically or contrastively, or with titles, they follow the noun:

<i>en el tercer capítulo/en el capítulo tercero</i> (latter order unusual)	in the third chapter
<i>los tres párrafos primeros</i>	the first three paragraphs (i.e. paras 1, 2 and 3)
<i>los tres primeros párrafos</i>	the three first paragraphs (i.e. para 1 of 3 different chapters)
<i>Isabel segunda (Isabel II)</i>	Elizabeth the Second
<i>por la enésima vez</i>	for the umpteenth time

10.13 Distribution

<i>Di cien mil pesos a cada uno</i>	I gave 100,000 pesos to each of them
<i>Traían sendos ramilletes de flores</i> (literary style, informally <i>cada uno traía un ramillete</i>)	Each bore a bouquet of flowers/Each one was carrying a bouquet
<i>cada cinco meses</i>	every five months

10.14 'Single', 'twofold', 'double', 'treble', etc.

<i>un billete de ida</i>	a single ticket
<i>una habitación individual</i>	a single room
<i>todos y cada uno de los problemas</i>	every single problem
<i>con una sola excepción/con una excepción única</i>	with a single exception
<i>ni uno solo</i>	not a single one
<i>Mi sueldo es el doble del suyo</i>	My salary is double his
<i>el doble acristalamiento</i>	double glazing
<i>una cama de matrimonio</i>	double bed
<i>Duplicaron la suma</i>	They doubled the sum
<i>Esta cantidad es el triple de ésa/esa</i>	This quantity is triple that

10.15 Dimensions and other numerical expressions

<i>Este cuarto mide 2,5 (dos coma cinco) por 3,75 (tres coma setenta y cinco metros)</i>	This room measures 2.5 metres by 3.75
<i>El área es de tres metros cuadrados</i>	The area is 3 square metres
<i>Forma un cuadrado de dos metros mil centímetros cúbicos</i>	It's two metres square 1000 cc
<i>El cable tiene cien metros de largo/de longitud</i>	The cable's 100m long
<i>Tiene cinco metros de hondo/ancho</i>	It's five metres deep/wide
<i>un motor de ocho caballos</i>	an 8 horsepower engine
<i>un motor de dos tiempos</i>	a two-stroke engine
<i>un ángulo de treinta grados</i>	a 30-degree angle
<i>Forma un ángulo recto</i>	It makes a right-angle
<i>Debe haber cinco bajo cero</i>	It must be five degrees below zero
<i>números pares/impares/primos</i>	even/odd/prime numbers
<i>dos nuevecavos dividido por tres sieteavos</i> (see 12.2 for discussion of <i>-avo</i>)	two ninths divided by three sevenths
<i>diez elevado al cubo/sexta/noveno</i>	ten to the third/sixth/ninth

10.16 Numerals: rules for writing

There is no universal agreement about the rules for writing numbers. The following recommendations reflect Martínez de Sousa (1977), 294-5, checked against the *Libro de estilo* of *El País*.

Figures are used:

- (a) for all numbers over nine;
- (b) for all numbers, when some of them are over nine: *3 ministros, 45 senadores y 100 diputados* 'three ministers, 45 senators and 100 members of Congress' (example from *Libro de estilo de El País*). Approximate numbers are, however, spelled out. See (b) below;
- (c) in timetables: *salida a las 20:30* 'departure at 20.30', *llegada a las 09.15* 'arrival at 09.15';
- (d) for dates: *el 23 de marzo de 1995* (occasionally seen written 1.995, although use of the point is not recommended in dates). See 32.9 for discussion of the format of dates. Numbers are used for years (1998, 2005) but not for decades: *los años noventa* 'the nineties';
- (e) for exact figures, including addresses: *2,38 kilómetros* '2.38 kilometres', *58 por ciento* '58 per cent', *419 páginas* '419 pages', *63 grados bajo cero* '63 degrees below zero', *223 habitantes* '223 inhabitants', *Avenida de la Libertad 7, 2° izquierdo* '7 Liberty Avenue, left-hand flat/apartment on second floor'.

Words are used:

- (a) for time elapsed: *veinticinco años* 'twenty-five years', *han pasado quince segundos* 'fifteen seconds have gone by';
- (b) for approximate figures: *Hubo más de quinientos heridos* 'There were more than five hundred injured';
- (c) for numbers that are quoted as spoken by someone: *Me dijo que quería comprar quince* 'He told me wanted to buy fifteen';
- (d) for telling the time (in literary works): *Llegó a las diez y media/cuatro cuarenta y cinco* 'He arrived at 10.30/4.45'.

Note

It is considered bad written style to begin a sentence with a number except in headlines and abbreviated messages. *El País* expressly forbids its journalists to open with *Diez personas resultaron heridas . . .*; this should be recast as *Un total de diez personas resultaron heridas* (*Libro de estilo*, 10.10).

10.17 Telephone numbers

The *Libro de estilo* of *El País* recommends that phone numbers should be expressed by pairs: *54-06-72 cincuenta y cuatro cero seis setenta y dos*.

If the number of figures is uneven, the first group should be in the hundreds: *542-67-22 = quinientos cuarenta y dos sesenta y siete veintidós*. *Cinco cuarenta y dos sesenta y siete veintidós* is also possible.

Codes and extensions are sometimes written in brackets: (033) 527-76-89 (19) = our 033-527 7689 (ext. 19). As the examples show, phone numbers are optionally written with hyphens separating the figures that are spoken as single numbers.



Personal pronouns

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The use of the third-person object pronouns *le* and *lo* is discussed separately in Chapter 12.

For possessive adjectives and pronouns, see Chapter 8.

11.1 Classification and forms

'Subject' pronouns may be optionally used to emphasize the subject of a verb: *yo hablo*, 'I'm talking', *él duerme* 'he's sleeping'.

'Object' pronouns (other than third-person) may be used *either* for the direct object *or* for the indirect object of the verb, *Te quiero* 'I love you', *Te hablo* 'I'm talking to you', *Nos vio* 'He saw us', *Nos dio* 'He gave (to) us'.

As a result of this dual function there is no need to distinguish between 'direct' and 'indirect' object pronouns in Spanish except in the case of the third person, where the difference between the 'direct' object forms (*lo/la/los/las*) and the 'indirect' forms (*le/les*) only partly coincides with the traditional distinction between direct and indirect objects. This latter problem is discussed separately in Chapter 12.

Spanish has an incomplete set of prepositional personal pronouns (*mí, ti, sí*) which must be used after prepositions. The ordinary subject pronouns are used for the other persons; see 11.5.

Se is traditionally called a 'reflexive' third-person object pronoun, but it is usually not reflexive and it sometimes apparently functions as a subject. It is discussed at length in Chapters 26 and 28.

TABLE I *Spanish personal pronouns*

This table contains all the personal pronoun forms currently in use.

PERSON	EMPHATIC SUBJECT	OBJECT	PREPOSITIONAL	
SINGULAR				
1	<i>yo</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>mí</i>	I
2	<i>tú</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>ti</i>	you (familiar)
	<i>vos</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>vos</i>	you (familiar) ¹
3	<i>usted</i>	<i>lo/lalle</i>	<i>usted</i>	you (polite)
	<i>él</i>	<i>lo/lalle</i>	<i>él</i>	he, it
	<i>ella</i>	<i>lalle</i>	<i>ella</i>	she, it
	<i>ello</i> ²	<i>lo/le</i>	<i>ello</i>	it (neuter)
	<i>se</i>		<i>sí</i>	'reflexive'
PLURAL				
1	<i>nosotros</i>	<i>nos</i>	<i>nosotros</i>	we (masc.)
	<i>nosotras</i>	<i>nos</i>	<i>nosotras</i>	we (fem.)
2	<i>vosotros</i>	<i>os</i>	<i>vosotros</i>	you (familiar masc. Spain)
	<i>vosotras</i>	<i>os</i>	<i>vosotras</i>	you (familiar fem. Spain)
	<i>ustedes</i>	<i>los/las/les</i>	<i>ustedes</i>	you (polite, also familiar in Lat. Am.)
3	<i>ellos</i>	<i>los/les</i>	<i>ellos</i>	they (masc.)
	<i>ellas</i>	<i>las/les</i>	<i>ellas</i>	they (fem.)
	<i>se</i> ³		<i>sí</i>	'reflexive'

11.2 Use of subject pronouns

11.2.1 Emphasis

The ordinary subject pronoun is expressed by the verb ending: *hablo* 'I speak', *habló* 'he/she/you spoke', *vendimos* 'we sold', *salieron* 'they/you went out', etc. The forms *yo/tú/él/ella/ustedes/ellos/ellas* are therefore usually only required for emphasis.

It is a bad error, very common among English speakers, to use Spanish subject pronouns when no emphasis is intended. To do so draws confusing attention to the subject of the verb, as in an English sentence pronounced with unnecessary stress on the pronoun, e.g. 'I got up at eight, I showered, I had coffee, I went to work . . . '.

The subject pronouns are used:

(a) When the pronoun stands alone;

¹ In parts of Latin America only; acceptability dependent on country and style.

² Discussed at 7.3.

³ Discussed in Chapters 26 and 28.

—¿Quién ha venido?	'Who's come?'
—Ellos	'They have'
—¿Quién lo ha hecho?	'Who did it?'
—Nosotros	'We did'
—¿Quién es?	'Who is it?'
—Yo	'Me'

(b) In contrast;

<i>Tú eres listo, pero ella es genial</i>	You're clever but she's a genius
<i>Yo no, pero ustedes sí</i>	I don't (or 'not me'), but you do (or 'you')

(c) *usted/ustedes* 'you' are used more frequently, either to avoid ambiguity or to stress the polite tone of an utterance;

<i>¿Adónde van ustedes?</i>	Where are you going?
<i>Si (usted) quiere, iré con usted</i>	If you like, I'll go with you

(d) Third-person pronouns may sometimes be required for clarity since a sentence like *Viene mañana* is ambiguous out of context: *Ella viene mañana* 'She's coming tomorrow', *Usted viene mañana* 'You're coming tomorrow', *Él habla inglés* 'He speaks English', etc.

Other subject pronouns may occasionally be used to clarify ambiguous verb endings: *Yo tenía/Él tenía* 'I had'/he had', *que yo fuese/que él fuese* 'that I should go/be'/that he should go/be'.

However, in both cases context usually makes the meaning clear.

11.2.2 Subject pronouns for inanimate nouns

Although *él/ella/ellos/ellas* may translate 'it' or 'them' when applied to inanimate things, in practice they are usually taken to stand for human beings when they are used as the subject of a verb.

For this reason one does not pronominalize *El viento sopla* 'The wind's blowing' as **Él sopla*, which is understood as 'He's blowing'; *sopla* = 'it's blowing'. But subject pronouns are sometimes used in Latin America to replace an inanimate subject where Peninsular speakers would use either no pronoun at all or an appropriate form of *éste* 'this'/'the latter':

<i>La "oposición" ha desaparecido de la radio, de la televisión y de la prensa diaria en el Perú. Ella subsiste, mínima, hostigada, desde las columnas de todos los periódicos (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)</i>	The 'opposition' has vanished from radio, television and daily press in Peru. It continues to operate, minimal, harassed, from the columns of all the newspapers
<i>. . . si algún "interés" tengo que defender como autor, él está mucho más cerca de los países socialistas que de los capitalistas (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)</i>	if I have any 'interest' to defend as an author, it is much closer to the socialist countries than the capitalist

11.3 Formal and informal modes of address

11.3.1 Voseo

Vos replaces *tú* (see next section) in many parts of Latin America, but it may be too intimate for casual use by foreigners. It is everywhere stylistically informal, and is replaced by *tú* in prayers and other solemn language: God, Jesus and the Virgin are usually addressed as *tú*, not as *vos*.

It is used in the spoken language of all social circles in Argentina, and in most social circles in Uruguay, Paraguay and most of Central America. It is also used in the extreme south of Mexico. In Colombia, Chile, Ecuador and Venezuela it is often heard, is possibly spreading, but may be considered 'lower-class' or provincial, although usage and attitudes vary between countries and regions.

It is not usual in Bolivia, Peru, Panama, Cuba, Mexico and Puerto Rico, but there are local pockets of *voseo* in some of these countries. Even where *voseo* is current in speech, *tú* is often written, even in intimate letters.

The possessive adjective for *vos* is *tu/tus*, the object pronoun is *te*, and the prepositional form is *vos*: *¿Te das cuenta de que estoy hablando de vos y de tu amiga?* 'Do you realize I'm talking about you and your friend?'

The verb forms used with *vos* fluctuate according to region and are best learnt locally. For details on the verb forms used with Argentine *voseo* see 13.1. and 16.2.8

Note

Voseo descends from the Golden Age use of *vos* as a polite second-person singular pronoun. *Vos* was still current in early nineteenth-century Spain to judge from Larra's *Artículos de costumbres* of the 1830s, and it survives in Spain in ritual language in official documents and in pseudo-archaic style - e.g. in Buero Vallejo's play *Las meninas* (in this case it is comparable to the use of 'thou' in modern English). In Spain this archaic singular pronoun *vos* takes the normal verb endings for *vosotros*, and the possessive adjective/pronoun is *vuestro/a/os/as*.

11.3.2 *Tú (vos) or usted?*

The basic rule - at least as far as Spain is concerned - is that *tú* is used for anyone with whom one is on first-name terms.⁴ *Tú* (or, where it is used, *vos*) is therefore used between friends, family members, when speaking to children or to animals, generally between strangers under the age of about thirty, and in prayers.

It therefore follows that, in Spain, *tú* is used much more readily than the French *tu* or German *Du*; its use is much more common in Spain than fifty years ago. However *tú/vos* should not be used to persons in authority or to older strangers or elderly persons unless they invite its use.

Use of *tú* where *usted* is expected may express contempt or threat: criminals call their victims *tú*, not *usted*.

Note

Generalization about the use of *tú* and *usted* is hazardous. In most of Latin America *tú/vos* is not used so readily⁵ and one finds dialects (e.g. Antioquía, Colombia) where all three pronouns, *usted*, *tú* and *vos*, may be used in the course of a single conversation, depending on the degree of intimacy reached at any moment.⁶

⁴ An exception occurs when addressing respected subordinates: *María, no se le olvide limpiar el horno* 'María, don't forget to clean the oven'.

⁵ It is very noticeable that in the Spanish department of King's College, London, which contains both Spanish and Latin-American students, the former readily address the teachers as *tú* whereas the latter often find it embarrassing to do so.

⁶ Batchelor and Pountain (1992) 284 report that in Chile husbands and wives may affectionately call one another *usted*.

11.3.3 Vosotros/as or ustedes?

Vosotros (*vosotras* to two or more females) is the plural of *tú* and is used in Spain for two or more persons with whom the speaker is on first-name terms.

It is used in all styles in standard European Spanish, but in Latin America it is replaced by *ustedes* in all but archaic styles, a phenomenon also found in popular speech in Southern Spain and the Canary Islands. A mother in Latin America addresses her child as *tú* or, in some places, as *vos*, and her children as *ustedes*. Even animals are called *ustedes* in Latin America.

Note

Vosotros, in the shape of its possessive *vuestro*, is however found in business correspondence in Argentina and perhaps elsewhere in Latin America. See footnote to 8.6b for an example.

11.3.4 Use of *usted*, *ustedes*

These are polite forms roughly equivalent to French *vous*, German *Sie* – but French and German usage is a poor guide, so see 11.3.2 and 11.3.3 for details of the relationship between *tú/vos* and *usted/ustedes*.

They require third-person verb forms: *Usted habla* ‘You speak’, *Ustedes hablan* ‘You (plural) speak’. In writing, *usted/ustedes* may optionally be abbreviated to *V./Vs.*, *Vd./Vds.*, or *Ud./Uds.*

Object forms of *usted/ustedes* are discussed under third-person pronouns (11.7.3).

Notes

(i) As subject pronouns *usted/ustedes* need only appear once at the beginning of a text or utterance and then occasionally thereafter to recall the politeness of tone. Whereas total omission of *usted/ustedes* may sound too informal, constant repetition may sound obsequious.

(ii) Agreement when one subject is *tú* and the other *usted* or *ustedes*, or one *vosotros* and the other *usted/ustedes*, is as for *ustedes*: *Tú y usted, quédense aquí* ‘You and you stay here’.

11.4 Nosotros/as, nos

Females referring to themselves and other females use *nosotras*.

The first-person plural is constantly used in books and articles when the author is modestly referring to her/himself. It is less pompous than the English ‘royal We’: *En este trabajo hemos procurado enfocar el problema de la inflación desde . . .* ‘In this work I (‘we’) have tried to approach the problem of inflation from . . .’.

Nos for *nosotros* is obsolete, but is used by popes, bishops and monarchs in official documents or ritual utterances.

Note

The following construction is peculiar to Latin America, especially Argentina: *Fuimos con mi hermano . . .* (Spain *Fui con mi hermano/Mi hermano y yo fuimos*) ‘I went with my brother’ (lit. ‘We went with my brother’), *Y así nos fuimos a la Patagonia, con Matilde* (E. Sábato, Argentina, interview; Spain *Fui con Matilde/Matilde y yo fuimos*), ‘So Matilde and I went to Patagonia’.

11.5 Forms of pronouns after prepositions

11.5.1 Use after prepositions

Only *yo*, *tú* and *se* have separate prepositional forms: *mí*, *ti* and *sí* (the latter is discussed at 11.5.3). In the other cases the normal subject forms, *él*, *ella*, *ello*, *nosotros*, *vosotros*, *usteded/ustedes*, *ellos/ellas*, are used after prepositions.

<i>No sabe nada de mí</i>	He knows nothing about me
<i>No tengo nada contra ti</i>	I've nothing against you
<i>Creo en vos</i> (Argentina, etc.)	I believe in you
<i>no delante de usted</i>	not in front of you
<i>Me refiero a él/ella</i>	I'm referring to him/her
<i>Confiamos en ustedes</i>	We trust in you
<i>Corrió tras ellos</i>	He ran after them
<i>aparte de ellas</i>	except for them (fem.)

However, seven prepositions or preposition-like words require the ordinary form of all the subject pronouns (but not of the pronoun *se* – see 11.5.3 note (i)). These are:

<i>entre</i>	between/among
<i>excepto</i>	except
<i>hasta</i>	when it means 'even' rather than 'as far as'
<i>incluso</i>	including/even
<i>menos</i>	except
<i>salvo</i>	except/save
<i>según</i>	according to
<i>Todos lo hicieron menos/excepto/salvo tú</i>	They all did it except/save you
<i>Que se quede entre tú y yo</i>	Let's keep it between you and me
<i>Hasta tú puedes hacer eso . . .</i>	Even you can do that . . .
<i>según tú y él</i>	according to you and him

Notes

(i) Note also the set phrases *de tú a tú* 'on equal terms', *hablar de tú* (i.e. *tutear*) 'to address someone as *tú*'. Also *Dije entre mí* 'I said to myself'.

(ii) For constructions like *?detrás tuyo* for *detrás de ti* 'behind you', or *?delante mío* for *delante de mí* 'in front of me' (frequent in colloquial Latin-American Spanish, substandard or popular in Spain), see 8.7.

11.5.2 Conmigo, contigo

These special forms replace *con* + *yo*, *con* + *tú*: *¿Vienes conmigo?* 'Are you coming with me?', *No quiero discutir contigo* 'I don't want to argue with you'.

In areas of *voseo*, *contigo* is rarely heard: *No quiero discutir con vos* 'I don't want to argue with you'.

11.5.3 Sí, consigo

These are special prepositional forms of the pronoun *se*.

Sí is used after prepositions other than *con*; the accent distinguishes it from *si* meaning 'if'.

Consigo replaces *con* + *se* and means 'with him/herself'. *Sí* is often combined with *mismo* when it is used reflexively:

<i>Están muy contentos de sí mismos</i>	They're very pleased with themselves
<i>No se refiere a sí misma</i>	She's not referring to herself
<i>Este fenómeno ya es muy interesante de por sí</i>	this phenomenon is in itself very interesting

Un brillante que para sí lo quisieran muchos
(advertisement)
Volvió en sí

A diamond many would like for
themselves
(S)he came round (regained
consciousness)
He's doing the best he can
She's cross with herself

No puede dar más de sí
Está disgustada consigo misma

Notes

(i) *Se* is unique in being the only pronoun requiring a prepositional form after *entre*: *entre tú y yo*, but *entre sí* 'among themselves'. *Entre sí* may also mean 'to himself': *Dijo entre sí* 'He said to himself'/'He murmured under his breath'.

(ii) *Sí* is not always really 'reflexive' as the following example shows: *El acento sirve para que se distingan los ingleses entre sí* 'Accent enables Englishmen to distinguish themselves from one another'.

(iii) There is a curious colloquial tendency to reject other persons of *volver en sí* 'to regain consciousness' and *dar de sí* 'to give of oneself'. One hears *recobré el conocimiento* (correct) or even *?volví en sí*, but the expected *volví en mí* is often avoided, even by educated speakers: *Volví en sí ya estando en la clínica* (interview, *El Nacional*, Mexico) 'I came round when I was (lit. 'already being') in the clinic', —*Perdona, ¿no te importa ponerte de pie para que te veamos?* —*Estoy de pie, es que no doy más de sí* (E. Arenas, dialogue, Spain) "'Excuse me, would you mind standing up so we can see you?" "I am standing up. This is all there is of me"'.

(iv) There is a good deal of disagreement about *sí* in the modern language. When *sí* refers to a specific person, the modern tendency is to prefer a non-reflexive prepositional pronoun. In answer to a questionnaire, the great majority of informants (professional people and students, Spanish) rejected *sí* in the following sentences:

Hablan francés entre ellos (?entre sí)
Yo sé que usted toca para usted misma
(?para sí misma)

They speak French among themselves
I know you play (music) for yourself

Lo mantuvo contra ella con uno de sus brazos (E. Sábato, Argentina)

She held him against herself with one arm

Tenía las manos apoyadas en la barra, delante de él (?ante sí)

His hands were resting on the bar, in front of him(self)

Cerró la puerta tras él (?tras sí)

He shut the door after him(self)

Usted tiene ante usted a un hombre que . . .
(interview, *El Nacional*, Mexico)

You have before you a man who . . .

El policía los vio venir hacia él (?hacia sí)

The policeman saw them coming towards him(self)

Guárdese para usted

Keep it for yourself

11.6 Pronouns and agreement

Verbs sometimes agree with personal pronouns in ways unfamiliar to English speakers:

Soy yo/somos nosotros/fuisteis vosotros/fueron ellos

it's me/it's us/it was you/it was them⁷ (lit. 'I am me', 'we are we', 'you were you', 'they were they')

El feo de la foto eres tú
—¿Quién ha dicho eso? —*He sido yo*
(Lat. Am. —¿Quién dijo eso?
—Fui yo)

The ugly one in the photo is you
'Who said that?' 'It was me'

⁷ Or, as some English-speakers insist, 'it is I', 'it is we', 'it was they', etc.

When answering the phone one says *soy Ana* 'it's Ana (here)' (lit. 'I'm Ana'), *soy Antonio* 'it's Antonio speaking'. *Es Ana* 'it's Ana' is only possible when said by someone else about Ana.

11.7 Object pronouns

The term 'object pronouns' is used in this book to refer to the forms *me/te/lo/la/le/nos/os/los/las/les* and *se* – although the latter apparently sometimes functions as a grammatical subject, as in *se vive* 'one lives', *Se está mejor aquí* 'One's better off here'. See 28.6 for further discussion of this construction.

Traditional grammars often divide these pronouns into two lists, 'accusative' or 'direct object' pronouns, and 'dative' or 'indirect object' pronouns, but only the third-person set has two forms (*le/les* as opposed to *lo/la/los/las*), and the difference between them only partly coincides with the traditional distinction between 'direct' and 'indirect' objects.

The difference between *le* and *lo* is discussed separately in Chapter 12. For 'pronominal' verbs (sometimes inaccurately called 'reflexive' verbs), see Chapter 26.

11.7.1 Forms of first and second-person object pronouns

	singular	plural
First person	<i>me</i>	<i>nos</i>
Second person	<i>te</i>	<i>os</i> (see note (iii))

Notes

(i) *Usted/ustedes* take third-person object pronouns.

(ii) *Te* is the object form of *tú* or *vos* (where *vos* is used): *Vos sabés que te vi ayer* (Argentina) 'You know I saw you yesterday', *Vos te arrepentirás* (Argentina) 'You'll be sorry'.

(iii) *Os* corresponds to *vosotros* and is therefore not heard in Latin America, where *ustedes* is used for both polite and familiar address; see 11.3.3 for discussion.

11.7.2 Use of first and second-person object pronouns

The main problem raised for the English-speaking learner by these (and by the third-person) object pronouns is the variety of translations possible for each form.

Basically Spanish object pronouns merely indicate the person 'affected' by a verb phrase. They do not indicate *how* the object is affected; this must be worked out from the meaning of the verb, from context or by common sense. English makes the meaning much more explicit, so *me* can, for example, be translated into English in at least thirteen ways in the following sentences:

Me han visto
Me dejó una finca
Me ha aparcado el coche
Entró en mi tienda y me compró una agenda

Me sacaron tres balas
Me han quitado a mis hijos
Me tiene envidia
Me tiró una bola de nieve
Me encontraron mil pesetas

They've seen **me**
 He left an estate **to me**
 He's parked the car **for me**
 He came into my shop/(US) 'store' and bought a diary **off/from me**
 They took three bullets **out of me**
 They've taken my children **from me**
 He's envious **of me**
 He threw a snowball **at me**
 They found 1000 ptas **on me**

Me echaron una manta
Voy a comprarme un helado
Siempre me pone pegas
Me rompió el brazo

They threw a blanket **over me**
 I'm going to buy **myself** an ice cream
 He always finds fault **with me**
 He broke **my** arm

It is not clear whether the terms 'direct object' and 'indirect object' are helpful descriptions of these various uses. 'Indirect object' may encourage students to limit their use of object pronouns to dative constructions and to neglect such sentences as *Me quitó el libro* 'He took the book off me'.

Lists A and B (at 12.3 and 12.4) show numerous examples of sentences in which *me/te/os/nos* could be substituted for *le/les* or *lo/lallos* where the meaning is appropriate.

A special case arises when the object pronoun and the subject pronoun (usually indicated by the verb ending) refer to the same person or thing, e.g. *Me lavo* 'I'm washing (myself)', *Te equivocaste* 'You were mistaken', *Miguel se va* 'Miguel's leaving', *Nos caímos* 'We fell over'. We call such verbs 'pronominal verbs' and discuss them in Chapter 26.

11.7.3 Use of third-person object pronouns

The distinction between *le/les* and *lo/las/los/las* is discussed in Chapter 12.

These overworked pronouns also have a second-person meaning since they are used for *usted/ustedes* 'you':

Doctora Smith, le aseguro que la llamé ayer

Dr Smith (fem.), I assure you I rang you/her yesterday

Le vi ayer (Spain only; see 12.5.1, 2)

I saw you/him yesterday

Lo vi ayer (Lat. Am. and, optionally, Spain)

I saw it/him/you yesterday

Los vi ayer

I saw you/them yesterday

11.8 Pronouns with verbs of motion

Object pronouns cannot replace the preposition *a* plus a noun if mere physical arrival or approach is involved: *Voy a la reunión* > *voy allí* (not **le voy*) 'I'm going to the meeting' > 'I'm going to it', *Acude a ella* 'He goes to her':

Cuando tiene problemas siempre va a ella

When he has problems he always goes to her

Me dirijo a ustedes

I'm turning to you/addressing you/writing to you

todo el occidente que vino a nosotros

the whole of the west (i.e. western world) which came to us

(M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)

(S)he usually turns to him

Suele recurrir a él

However, object pronouns are often used colloquially with the following verbs, particularly if the verb is third-person:

Se me acercó/Se acercó a mí

He approached me

Él se le acercó por la espalda (J. Marsé, Spain)

He approached her from behind

Ella se le reunió al doblar la esquina

She caught up with him as she turned the corner

(L. Goytisolo, Spain)

No sólo los sollozos de los niños y de los nativos se alzaron entonces, sino que se les unieron los de los sirvientes (José Donoso, Chile)

Not only did sobbing from the children and natives break out then, but the servants' (sobs) were added to it

Notes

(i) This construction is rare in the first and second persons: *Se le opuso* 'He opposed him', but *Te opusiste a él* 'You opposed him' rather than *?Te le opusiste*.

Forms with first and second persons may occur in Latin America, especially in Mexico,⁸ where sentences like *Me le acerqué* (i.e. *Me acerqué a él*) 'I approached him', *Te ruego que te nos incorpores* (for . . . *que te incorpores a nosotros*) 'I'm asking you to join us' are common. A Mexican informant claimed that *?Me le arrodillé a la Virgen* 'I kneeled before/to the Virgin' is heard in his country, but the sentence was rejected by Spaniards and Argentines in favour of *Me arrodillé delante de la Virgen*.

(ii) *Se le puso delante*, *Se me puso delante* 'He stood in front of him', 'He stood in front of me' occur colloquially for *Se puso delante de él/Se puso delante de mí*, and are more emotional in tone.

(iii) The example from José Donoso is an exception to the rule that object pronouns are not used with such verbs when the sentence refers to a non-human entity: the normal construction would be *Se acercó al puente* 'He approached the bridge' > *Se acercó a él* 'He approached it', not **Se le acercó*.

(iv) Object pronouns are used to denote a person affected by *llegar* and *venirse* (if their subject is inanimate) and by *venir con*: *El armario se le vino encima* 'The cupboard/(US) "closet" collapsed on him/her/you', *Siempre me viene con pejiuerras* 'He's always coming to me with irritating details', *cuando me llegó la noticia de su triunfo* 'when news of his triumph reached me'.

(v) In *Le viene a decir que . . .* He's coming to tell him that . . . the *le* belongs to the *decir*: *Viene a decirle que . . .*

In *Le viene bien* 'It suits him' and *¿Qué tal te va?* 'How are things going?'/'How're you doing?', advantage, not motion, is involved.

11.9 Pronouns with *ser* and *resultar***(a) With adjectives:**

The choice is between *Me es necesario* and *Es necesario para mí*. The former is possible with *ser* only if the adjective expresses a meaning included in List A, 12.3. *Resultar* allows the construction with a wider range of adjectives, and may be thought of as the 'involving' counterpart of *ser*:

<i>Les es/resulta necesario</i>	It's necessary for them
<i>Me es/resulta importante</i>	It's important to me
<i>Nos era imprescindible contactar a sus padres</i>	It was absolutely necessary for us to contact her parents
<i>Le era más fácil soportar los dolores ajenos que los propios</i> (G. García Márquez, Colombia)	It was easier for him to put up with other people's suffering than his own

but

<i>La casa era demasiado blanca para mí/me resultaba demasiado blanca</i> (not <i>*me era demasiado blanca</i>)	The house was too white for me
<i>Era muy feo para ella</i>	It was very ugly for her
<i>Le resultaba muy feo</i>	He seemed very ugly to her

The following list will give an idea of the kind of adjective that can take object pronouns with *ser*:

⁸ J. Lope Blanch (1991), 20.

<i>agradable/desagradable</i>	agreeable/disagreeable
<i>conocido/desconocido</i>	known/unknown
<i>conveniente/inconveniente</i>	suitable/unsuitable
<i>fácil/difícil</i>	easy/difficult
<i>grato/ingrato</i>	pleasing/displeasing
<i>indiferente</i>	indifferent
<i>leal</i>	loyal
<i>molesto</i>	bothersome
<i>necesario/innesesario</i>	necessary/unnecessary
<i>permitido/prohibido</i>	allowed/prohibited
<i>posible/imposible</i>	possible/impossible
<i>simpático/antipático</i>	nice/nasty (persons)
<i>sincero, franco</i>	sincere, frank
<i>suficiente/insuficiente</i>	sufficient/insufficient
<i>urgente</i>	urgent
<i>útil/inútil</i>	useful/useless

Notes

(i) Many of these adjectives could also be constructed with *para* or *con*: *Es conveniente para ellos/Les es conveniente* 'It's suitable for/to them', *Voy a ser franco con usted/Le voy a ser franco* 'I'll be frank with you'. The object pronouns convey a higher level of personal involvement.

(ii) *Grande, pequeño* take *le/les* if they mean 'too big', 'too small': *Ese puesto le está grande* 'That job's too big for him'. Otherwise *resultar* or *ser para* must be used: *Es grande para él* 'It's big to/for him', etc.

(iii) The nuance conveyed by *resultar* is often virtually untranslatable. Compare *Es feo* = 'It/He's ugly' and *Resulta feo* 'The effect is ugly'/'He/It is ugly as a result'.

(b) Ser plus personal pronouns with nouns:

This occurs only with a few nouns, most derived from or close in meaning to the adjectives listed above.

<i>Si le es molestia, dígamelo</i>	If it's a nuisance for you, tell me
<i>Me/Le era un gran placer/Era un gran placer para mí/él</i>	It was a great pleasure for/to me/him,
<i>Nos es de interés</i>	It's of interest to us

Notes

(i) Spanish does not allow a pronominal construction in translations of sentences like 'I was always a good mother to him' *Siempre fui una buena madre para él* (not **siempre le fui . . .*).

(ii) *Resultar* has limited use with nouns: *Mi temporada aquí me está resultando un verdadero viaje de estudios* (J.L. Borges, Argentina, letter style) 'My stay here is turning out to be a real study trip for me', *Si le resulta un problema* 'If it turns out to be a problem to you'.

11.10 'Resumptive' lo with ser, estar and parecer

The predicate of *ser, estar* and *parecer* is echoed or resumed by *lo*: —*Parece buena la tierra desde aquí. —Lo es* "The land looks good from here." "It is". This construction is discussed at 7.4, note (i).

11.11 Object pronouns used to denote personal involvement

Object pronouns may be included in a verb phrase to show that a person is intensely affected. Compare the indignant Frenchman's *Regardez-moi ça!* 'Just look at that for me!', 'Just look at that, will you!'.

Usually the effect cannot be translated into standard English, although popular English sometimes uses 'on me', 'on you', etc. in order to include the person affected. Compare *Se me han ido de casa* 'They've left home "on me"', *Se le ha averiado el coche* 'His car's broken down "on him"'. In Spanish this device is more typical of familiar speech or when there is a strong emotional involvement on the speaker's part, e.g. when parents are speaking about their child:

Mi marido se me está quedando delgadísimo
Me le has estropeado tres camisas
Pues, yo eché a una porque me fumaba y
ahora tengo otra que, además de fumar, me
bebe (E. Arenas, Spain, dialogue, very colloquial)
Éiname al niño
Sírovamele un café a la señorita (Argentina, quoted García (1975); Spain *sírvale un café* . . .)
Cuidamele (or *Cuidamelo*) *bien*

My husband's getting terribly thin
 You've spoilt three of his shirts for me
 Well, I fired one [maid] because she smoked ('on me') and now I've got another who not only smokes but drinks ('on me')
 Do the child's hair for me
 Serve a coffee to the young lady for me
 Look after him well for me

This device of including mention of an interested party is more favoured in parts of Latin America than in Spain. *Me le pintaste la mesa* 'You painted the table for him for me' is apparently acceptable for some Latin American speakers. Peninsular Spanish tends to avoid clusters of two object pronouns when neither is a direct object.

11.12 Order of object pronouns

The invariable order of object pronouns when two or more appear together is:

se *te/os* *me/nos* *le/lolla/les/los/las*

i.e. *se*, if it occurs, comes first, second person precedes first, and third-person pronouns come last:

María te lo dijo
Me lo habré dejado en casa
Te lo llevé al tinte (or *a la tintorería*)
No querían comunicárnoslo
¿Por qué no se lo prueba?
Se te ha caído la tinta
Se le ha muerto un hijo
Nos los vamos a comprar
Se nos ha vuelto listísimo
Yo me le fui encima, pero ella chilló
 (J. Cortázar, Argentina; Spain *Yo me le eché encima* . . .)

Maria told it to you
 I must have left it at home
 I took it to the cleaner's for you
 They didn't want to tell it to us
 Why don't you try it on?
 You've dropped the ink
 A son of his/hers has died
 We're going to buy them for ourselves
 He's turned into a genius 'on us'
 I lunged at her, but she screamed

Notes

(i) Reversal of the correct order, e.g. *¿Me se ha caído* for *Se me ha caído* 'I've dropped it' (lit. 'It's fallen down "on me"'), *¿¿Me se oye?* for *¿Se me oye?* 'Can anyone hear me?'/ 'Is anyone listening?', is a classic mistake of uneducated speech.

(ii) The order shown is invariable for all persons, unlike in French. Compare *Me lo da* and *Il me le donne* 'He gives it to me' (same order) and *Se lo da* and *Il le lui donne* 'He gives it to him'.

11.13 Replacement of *le* by *se*

11.13.1 *Se* for *le* when the latter is followed by a pronoun beginning with *l*

If *le* or *les* are immediately followed by an object pronoun beginning with *l*, i.e. by *lo*, *la*, *los* or *las*, the *le* or *les* must be replaced by *se*: *le doy* 'I give to him/her/you' + *lo* 'it' > *se lo doy* 'I give it to him/her/you' – **never** **le lo doy*:

<i>Quiero dárselo</i>	I want to give it to him
<i>Se lo dije a ella</i>	I told her
<i>Se lo dije a ellos</i>	I told them (masc.)
<i>¿Quiere usted que se lo envuelva?</i>	Do you want me to wrap it for you?

Note

This phenomenon, unique to Spanish among the Romance languages, is traditionally explained by the alleged ugliness of too many *l*'s. Whether this is the reason or not, it is useful to remember that in Spanish two object pronouns beginning with *l* can **never** stand side-by-side.

11.13.2 Latin-American *se los* for *se lo*

The combination *se lo* is very ambiguous. For example, *se lo dije* may mean 'I told it to him, her, you (*usted*)', 'them' (*ellos* or *ellas*) or 'you' (*ustedes*)'. A *él/ella/usted/ellos/ellas/ustedes* may be added if context does not make the issue clear: *Se lo dije a ustedes* 'I told you', etc.

There is a universal but grammatically illogical tendency in spontaneous Latin-American speech, very common even in educated language, to show that *se* stands for *les* by pluralizing the *direct* object pronoun, i.e. ?*Se los dije*, for *Se lo dije* 'I told it to **them**':

<i>... a un policía le había gustado más bien poco la gracia y se los había dicho</i> (J. Cortázar, Argentina, dialogue, for <i>se lo había dicho</i>)	one policeman didn't really like the joke and told them so
<i>Se los dije, hijos, ganó 'Tierra y Libertad'</i> (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue; Spain <i>se lo dije</i> or, in this case, <i>os lo dije</i>)	I told you all/(US) 'you guys', 'Land and Liberty' won

This construction is very deep-rooted in spontaneous Latin-American speech but it is vehemently rejected by Spaniards. It is not accepted in formal written styles in Latin America.

11.14 Position of object pronouns

The position of object pronouns in relation to a verb depends on the form of the verb.

11.14.1 Pronouns with verbs in finite tenses

Pronouns come immediately before the verb in the order given at 11.12. In compound tenses the pronouns are placed before the auxiliary verb:

<i>Se los entregamos</i>	We gave them (masc.) to him/her/it/ them/you
<i>Te los enviaré luego</i>	I'll send you them (masc.) later
<i>Os las guardaré (Spain)</i>	I'll keep them (fem.) for you
<i>La he visto</i>	I've seen her/it/you
<i>Se me ha roto el cinturón</i>	My belt's broken

Notes

(i) No word may come between the object pronoun and a verb, and they are pronounced as though they formed part of the verb, e.g. *te lo dijo* 'he said it to you' is pronounced *telodijo*.

(ii) In pre-twentieth century literary style, object pronouns were often joined to verbs in finite tenses: *Contestóles así* 'He answered them thus' = *Les contestó así*, *Encontrábase exiliado* 'He found himself exiled' = *Se encontraba exiliado*, *Ocurriósele* 'It occurred to him/her' = *Se le ocurrió*.

Rules for this construction are omitted here since it is now extinct for practical purposes, except in a few set phrases, e.g. *habráse visto . . .* 'well, did you ever . . .', *diríase* (literary) 'one might say', *dícese* (literary) 'it is said', etc.⁹ The construction is still occasionally found in burlesque or very flowery styles, and also in headlines in some Latin-American countries: *Entrevístanse Gorbachov y Fidel en Moscú* (*Granma*, Cuba) 'Gorbachev and Fidel hold talks in Moscow'.

11.14.2 Position with imperatives

See 17.4.

11.14.3 Position with infinitives

(a) If the infinitive is used as a noun or follows an adjective or a participle plus a preposition, pronouns are suffixed to it in the usual order:

<i>Sería una locura decírselo</i>	It would be madness to tell it to him
<i>mejor enviárselo ahora</i>	best send it to him/her/them now
<i>Rechazaron el proyecto por considerarlo demasiado caro</i>	They rejected the project on the grounds that it was too expensive
<i>Estamos hartos de oírlo</i>	We're fed up with hearing it from you

As the examples show, when more than one pronoun is attached to the infinitive a written accent is needed to show that the position of the stress has not changed.

(b) If the infinitive depends on a previous verb, there are two possibilities:

(i) Join the pronouns to the infinitive as in the previous examples.

<i>Quiero hacerlo</i>	I want to do it
<i>Pudieron salvarla</i>	They managed to save her
<i>Propusieron alquilárnoslos</i>	They suggested renting them to us
<i>Acabo de dártelo</i>	I've just given it to you

This is the safest, and in the view of some excessively strict purists, the only 'correct' option.¹⁰

(ii) Place the pronouns before the finite verb: *lo quiero hacer*, etc. See the following section for discussion.

11.14.4 Quiero verlo or lo quiero ver?

Suffixed object pronouns are very often shifted leftwards when the infinitive depends on a preceding verb: *Quiero verlo* > *Lo quiero ver* 'I want to see it', etc. This construction, which has a long history, is possible with a large

⁹ *Dícese* survives in various forms in spoken Latin-American Spanish, e.g. *dizque*. See 28.4.

¹⁰ Francisco Marsá (1986), 6.1.2, says that *no se debe decir* is 'incorrect' for *no debe decirse*, although he admits that violations of this 'rule' – even by him – are very common. Cervantes's *Don Quijote*, which is the purists' Bible, contains many instances of shifted pronouns.

number of common verbs, but it is subject to controversy and apparently arbitrary constraints.

When shifting is possible, the two constructions seem to occur in Spain with about equal frequency in ordinary speech – although the shifted forms predominate in relaxed styles. To judge by the dialogue of modern novels, Latin-American speech strongly prefers the shifted forms. The suffixed forms are everywhere preferred in formal written styles.

The following are everyday examples current on both continents:

querer <i>Te la quiero enviar/Quiero enviártela</i>	I want to send it (fem.) to you
poder <i>No puedo atenderle/No le puedo atender en este momento</i>	I can't attend to you/her/him at this moment
deber <i>Deberías explicárnoslo/Nos lo deberías explicar</i>	You ought to explain it to us
tener que <i>Tiene que devolvértelo/Te lo tiene que devolver</i>	He has to give it back to you
acabar de <i>Pero si acabo de verlo/lo acabo de ver</i>	But I've just seen him! (contradicting <i>si</i>)
llegar a <i>Incluso llegué a caermelme llegué a caer por unas escaleras</i>	I even managed to fall down a flight of stairs
haber de <i>He de consultarlo/Lo he de consultar con la almohada</i>	I'd better sleep on it (lit. 'consult my pillow')
dejar de <i>No dejes de llamarla/No la dejes de llamar</i>	Don't forget to phone her
ir a <i>Me temía que Roberto fuera a contárselo/se lo fuera a contar a mamá</i>	I was worried that Roberto would go and tell it to mother
volver a <i>Como vuelvas a decírmelo/Como me lo vuelvas a decir, me voy</i>	If you say it to me again, I'm going
hacer <i>Me hizo abrirlo/Me lo hizo abrir</i>	He made me open it

The list at 18.2.3 indicates those common verbs which allow this shifting of suffixed pronouns, although some verbs, e.g. *fingir* , are controversial.

Pronouns cannot be shifted in this way if:

(a) The earlier verb is a 'pronominal' verb (see Chapter 26 for a discussion of pronominal verbs).

Volverse 'to turn round' is a pronominal verb in its own right (discussed at 26.6.2 and 27.2), so one says *Se volvió a mirarla* 'He turned to look at her' but not *Se la volvió a mirar*. The latter is only possible if we take the *se* to stand for *le* and the verb to be *volver* and not *volverse*, as in *El médico volvió a mirarle la lengua* 'The doctor looked at his tongue again' > *Se la volvió a mirar* 'He looked at it again'.

Compare the following examples in which *ver* and *dejar* are **not** pronominal verbs and therefore allow pronoun shifting:

<i>Nos ha visto hacerlo/Nos lo ha visto hacer</i>	He saw us do it
<i>Os dejaron llamarla/Os la dejaron llamar</i>	They let you ring her

Other common pronominal verbs that do not allow pronoun shifting are: *ponerse a* 'to begin', *echarse a* 'to begin' (the non-pronominal verb of the same meaning, *echar a*, also does not allow pronoun shifting), *meterse a* 'to begin'. The asterisked forms in the following examples are not correct Spanish:

<i>Se puso a hacerlo</i> (not * <i>Se lo puso a hacer</i>)	He started to do it
<i>(Se) lo echó a perder</i> (not *(<i>Se</i>) <i>echó a perderlo</i>)	(roughly) He lost it/'Off he goes and loses it'
<i>Se metió a venderlos</i> (not * <i>Se los metió a vender</i>)	He started to sell them

(b) If any other word intervenes between the verb phrase and the following infinitive: *Trató varias veces de hacerlo* 'He tried several times to do it' but not **Lo trató varias veces de hacer*; *Quisiera no hacerlo* 'I'd prefer not to do it' but not **Lo quisiera no hacer*; *Quiero mucho verla*, not **La quiero mucho ver* for *Quiero mucho verla* 'I really want to see her', etc.

An exception is made of a few common verb phrases that include a preposition, usually *a* or *de* or the conjunction *que*: *Lo trató de hacer* 'He tried to do it', *Le tengo que hablar* 'I've got to talk to her', *Lo empezó a hacer* 'He began to do it'.

The rule is also sometimes broken in familiar speech, cf. *No le tengo nada que envidiar*, familiar for *No tengo nada que envidiarle* 'I've got nothing to envy him/her/you for':

<i>El que no se tiene que andar metiendo eres tú</i> (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)	The one who shouldn't go round getting involved is you
--	--

(c) If the main verb is a positive imperative: *Procura hacerlo* 'Try to do it', *Ven a verme* 'Come and see me'. Forms like *Venme a ver* are popular or familiar. But negative imperatives can be shifted in informal styles: *No intentes hacerlo* or *No lo intentes hacer* 'Don't try to do it', *No vengas a verme/No me vengas a ver* 'Don't come and see me'.

Notes

(i) In *Voy a verla* 'I'm going to see her' either motion or futurity is meant. Usually *La voy a ver* can only be interpreted as a future form of the verb: 'I'll see her', although familiar speech may allow shifting with both meanings: *Ellos me fueron a comprar el billete* (Interview in *Triunfo*, Spain) 'They went and bought my ticket for me'.

(ii) If more than one infinitive is involved in a construction that allows pronoun shifting, several solutions are possible, the first being safest for foreigners:

<i>No quiero volver a decírtelo</i>	I don't want to tell you it again
<i>No quiero volvértelo a decir</i>	" "
<i>No te lo quiero volver a decir</i>	" "
<i>Puedes empezar a hacerlo</i>	You can start to do it
<i>Puedes empezarlo a hacer</i>	" "
<i>Lo puedes empezar a hacer</i>	" "
<i>Debes tratar de hacerlo</i>	You must try to do it
<i>Debes tratarlo de hacer</i>	" "
<i>Lo debes tratar de hacer</i>	" "

However, if two pronouns are joined as suffixes they must stay together if they are shifted. In other words, starting from *Tienes que vérselo hacer* which, for Peninsular speakers at least, is the correct way of saying 'You have to see him doing it', the only permitted colloquial shift is *Se lo tienes que ver hacer*. However, we found that

Latin-American informants rejected *Se lo tienes que ver hacer* in favour of *Le tienes que ver hacerlo*.

(iii) It is difficult to explain why some verbal phrases allow pronoun shifting whereas others do not. The difference between a phrase like *tratar de* 'to try to', which allows pronoun shifting, and *tardar en* 'to be late in'/'to take time over . . .', which does not, is presumably that the preposition *de* has become so intimately fused with *tratar* that the two words are processed by the speaker as a single word. Only long familiarity with the language can resolve this problem of when pronoun shifting is possible.

11.14.5 Position of pronouns with the gerund

(a) In combination with *estar* (continuous verb forms) and a few other auxiliary verbs like *andar*, *ir*, *venir*, the pronouns may be either attached or shifted:

<i>Te lo estoy contando/Estoy contándotelo</i>	I'm telling you it
<i>Nos estuvieron esperando/Estuvieron esperándonos</i>	They waited for us
<i>Os lo estoy diciendo/Estoy diciéndooslo</i>	I'm saying it to you (<i>vosotros</i>)
<i>Se me quedó mirando/Se quedó mirándome</i> (the <i>se</i> belongs to <i>quedarse</i>)	He remained gazing at me

The second construction is slightly more formal and is probably safer for foreign students.

(b) In other cases the pronouns are always attached to the gerund: *Disfruta mirándolo* 'He enjoys himself looking at it', *Se divierte quemándolos* 'He amuses himself by burning them', *Contesta insultándolos* 'He replies by insulting them'.

Notes

(i) *Seguir* allows both constructions, but some native speakers did not accept pronoun shifting with *continuar*: *Se seguían viendo/Seguían viéndose* 'They went on seeing one another', *Me sigue dando la lata/Sigue dándome la lata* 'He's still pestering me', but *Continuaban viéndose*, *Continúa dándome la lata*.

(ii) In case (a), if the auxiliary verb is an infinitive preceded by one of the verbs that allow pronoun shifting (see 11.14.4), several solutions are possible: *Debe estar recordándolo/Debe estarlo recordando/Lo debe estar recordando* 'He must be remembering it/him', *Tenía que quedarse mirándola/Tenía que quedársela mirando/Se la tenía que quedar mirando* 'He had to remain looking at her'.

11.14.6 Position with past participles

Pronouns come before the auxiliary verb:

<i>Se ha equivocado</i>	She's made a mistake
<i>Se lo ha traído de China</i>	He's brought it from China
<i>Te lo hemos mandado ya</i>	We've already sent it to you

Notes

(i) In phrases in which pronoun shifting is possible (discussed at 11.14.4), there are two options:

<i>Se lo hemos tenido que vender/Hemos tenido que vendérselo</i>	We had to sell it to him
<i>La he vuelto a ver/He vuelto a verla</i>	I've seen her again
<i>No he podido abrirlo/No lo he podido abrir</i>	I couldn't open it
<i>Ha debido hablarle/Le ha debido hablar</i>	He must have spoken to him

(ii) Literary language used to join personal pronouns to past participles when the auxiliary verb was deleted, but this is now only seen in flowery writing

in some Latin-American Republics, e.g. *un accidente ocurri le en el corral de yeguas* ‘an accident that happened to him in the yard where the mares are kept’ (Uruguay, cited Kany, 156), usually *que le hab a ocurrido*.

11.15 Emphasis of object pronouns

(a) Object pronouns may be emphasized by adding *a* and the prepositional form of the pronoun:

La vi a ella, pero no a  l
Te lo dar n a ti, pero no a  l
  A m  me lo dices!

I saw **her** but not **him**
 They’ll give it to **you**, but not to **him**
 You’re telling **me!**?

(b) Reflexive phrases may be emphasized by the appropriate number and gender of *mismo* added to a prepositional pronoun. Reciprocal sentences can be emphasized by the appropriate form of *el uno* and *el otro*:

Se lavaron

They washed (themselves)/They were washed

Se lavaron a s  mismos
Es dif cil vivir con quien no se estima a s  mismo (ABC, Spain)

They washed **themselves**
 It’s difficult to live with someone who does not value himself (‘herself’ is no doubt also intended)

Se quieren el uno al otro
Se quieren la una a la otra (two females)
Se envidian los unos a los otros

They love one another
 They love one another
 They envy one another (more than two involved)

Note

If both males and females are involved in a reciprocal sentence, the logical form might be thought to be *el uno a la otra*, but both pronouns are masculine: *Antonio y Mar a se quieren el uno al otro* ‘Antonio and Maria love one another’.

11.16 Redundant object pronouns

Spanish makes constant use of pronouns even when the thing they refer to is named by a noun: cf. *Le di un anillo a Mar a* ‘I gave Maria a ring’ (lit. ‘I gave to her to Maria a ring’), *Los dem s los tienes que dejar aqu * ‘The rest you’ll have to leave here’ (lit. ‘the rest you’ll have to leave them here’). Some of these redundant pronouns are virtually obligatory, others are more typical of informal styles.

11.16.1 Redundancy when object precedes verb

If, for purposes of emphasis or focus, the direct or indirect object of a verb precedes the verb, a redundant pronoun is usually obligatory. Compare *Compr  esta casa hace cinco a os* and *Esta casa la compr  hace cinco a os* ‘I bought this house five years ago’. Examples:

Lo que dice en p blico jams  lo consentir  ninguno de los dirigentes de la peque a pantalla (Cambio16, Spain)
A alguno de vosotros os quisiera ver yo en un buen fregado (D. Sueiro, familiar Spanish dialogue)
Eso no me lo negar s
Al profesor Berlin no le parece tan importante

What he says in public would never be tolerated by the people in charge of the ‘small screen’ (TV)
 I’d like to see one of you in a real mess
 You won’t deny me that
 It does not seem so important to

que Maquiavelo propusiera esa disyuntiva
(M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)

Professor Berlin that Machiavelli
suggested this dilemma

Notes

(i) The pronoun is omitted after *eso* in such phrases as *Eso creo yo* 'That's what I think', *Eso digo yo* 'That's what I think' (but compare *Eso lo digo yo* 'That's what I say'). Omission in other cases is very rare, but not unknown.

(ii) For a discussion of the effect of putting the object before the verb see 28.2.3.

(iii) The redundant pronoun is not used when the object noun is not preceded by an article or demonstrative adjective: *Mucha prisa ha debido tener* 'He must have been in a hurry', *Muchas cosas quiero contarte* 'I want to tell you a lot of things', *Aviones tenemos aquí que han costado más de cincuenta millones* 'We've got planes here that cost more than 50 million . . . '.

11.16.2 Redundant pronouns and 'indirect objects'

A redundant pronoun is normally inserted to show that a noun is 'involved', by the verb in one of the ways listed in List A at 12.3 (i.e. 'receiving', 'losing', 'advantage', 'involvement', etc.):

Esta solución le pareció a doña Matilde la más acertada (J.M. Guelbenzu, Spain)
Bueno, si no le dicen a uno cómo hay que hacerlo . . .

A vos te la tienen jurada (M. Puig, Argentina, dialogue)

Le puso un nuevo conmutador a la radio
Tráigale un jugo¹¹ de naranja a la niña
(A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)

This solution seemed to be the best one
to Doña Matilde

Well, if they don't tell one how to do
it . . .

They've got it in for you

He put a new knob on the radio
Bring the little girl an orange juice

Note

Omission of the redundant pronoun depersonalizes the indirect object and would be appropriate in formal writing, official documents or business letters when a distant tone is required: *Comunique los detalles al señor Presidente* 'Inform the President of the details', *Esto no corresponde a Odradek* (J.L. Borges: Odradek is a non-human creature) 'This is not a trait of Odradek's', *Es necesario dar cera a este tipo de suelo todas las semanas* (instruction leaflet, Spain) 'This type of floor must be waxed every week'.

In most cases the redundant pronoun is used, more so than fifty years ago and always with proper names: *Dáselo a Mario* 'Give it to Mario', *Se lo robaron a Julia* 'They stole it from Juliet' (*robar a . . .* 'to steal from . . .').

11.16.3 Le for redundant les

There is a strong tendency in spontaneous language everywhere to use the singular *le* in this construction for the plural *les*, especially (but not exclusively) when the pronoun refers to something inanimate:

Cualquiera le da vuelta a las razones por las que te viniste conmigo (J.M. Guelbenzu, Spain, dialogue)

no darle importancia a los detalles
¿Quieres devolverte la isla de Manhattan a los Algonquins? (C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue)

Y ese pequeño elemento ya justificaría que yo le pusiera la firma a sus papeles (M. Puig, Argentina, dialogue)

Anyone might ponder on the reasons
why you came to me

not to ascribe importance to details
Do you want to give Manhattan Island
back to the Algonquins?

And that little detail would be enough to
justify my signing your papers

¹¹ In Spain *el zumo* is used for the juice of fruits and vegetables, *el jugo* for meat juices.

Le viene natural a los niños (educated Spaniard, overheard)
Bayardo San Román le puso término a tantas conjeturas (G. García Márquez, Colombia)

It comes naturally to children

Bayardo San Román put an end to so many conjectures

This tendency is so deep-rooted, even in educated speech, that sentences like *Él les* (for *le*) *da mucha importancia a las apariencias* 'He ascribes a lot of importance to appearances' sound frankly odd to many speakers. But it is technically 'wrong', and should be avoided in formal writing, e.g. in this case by omitting the redundant pronoun altogether.

11.16.4 Redundant direct object pronouns

As was said at 11.16.1, a redundant pronoun is usually obligatory when an object precedes the verb.

When the direct object *follows* the verb, use of a redundant object pronoun is common with *todo* and is required when it is necessary to reinforce an object pronoun, e.g. *La vi a ella pero no a él* 'I saw *her* but not *him*' (not **vi a ella*).

In other cases use of a redundant pronoun with *direct objects* is avoided in Spain. However, it is very common in Latin America in spontaneous speech, and in Argentina it appears even in literary styles, especially with proper names:

Ahora me lo tienes que contar todo (normal with *todo*)

Now you have to tell me everything

Morgan . . . también lo mandó llamar a Abdulmalik (J.L. Borges, Argentina dialogue; Spain. . . *mandó llamar a Abdulmalik*)

Morgan also had Abdulmalik sent for

Le quiere mucho a ese hijo (Spain, familiar)
No lo conocen a Perón en Córdoba, lo confunden con un cantante de tangos (J. Asís, dialogue, Argentina; Spain *no conocen*. . .)

She loves that son a lot
 They've never heard of Perón in Córdoba. They think he's a tango singer

Convénzalo a su amigo de que acepte la beca (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue; Spain *convenza a su amigo*. . .)

Persuade your friend to accept the grant

11.16.5 Redundant pronouns in relative clauses

Redundant pronouns occur in spoken Spanish in relative clauses, especially in non-restrictive clauses, and may appear in writing, particularly if several words separate the *que* and the verb that depends on it:

Te voy a hacer una confesión que nunca me animé a hacerla a nadie (Lat. Am., from Kany, 150)

I'm going to make you a confession
 I never had the courage to make to anybody

Los gramáticos aconsejan muchas cosas que nadie las dice (Spain, informant)

Grammarians recommend lots of things that no one says

Sólo por ti dejaría a don Memo a quien tanto le debo (C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue)

Only for you would I leave Don Memo, whom I owe so much

This construction may sound uneducated, especially in restrictive clauses (the first two examples), and is best left to native speakers.

12

Le/les and *lo/la/los/las*

This chapter is devoted to the problem of the relationship between the third-person object pronouns *le/les* and *lo/la/los/las*.

For first and second-person pronouns (including *usted* and *ustedes*) and for third-person subject pronouns (*él, ella, ellos, ellas*), see Chapter 11.

12.1 The *le/lo* controversy: summary of arguments in this chapter

The rules governing the correct choice of third-person object pronouns are complex and vary a great deal throughout the Spanish-speaking world. The problem may be summarized thus:

The personal pronoun used for third-person *direct* objects, human and non-human, in more than 90% of cases and in more than 90% of the Spanish-speaking world, is *lo/la* for the singular and *los/las* for the plural. *Le/les* are used for indirect objects as defined at 11.7.2 and 12.3. This scheme is recommended for beginners pending deeper knowledge of the language.

However, *le/les* is also used for *direct* objects in the following cases:

- (a) In the standard language of Spain when the direct object is singular, human and male: *Yo le vi* 'I saw him' instead of *Yo lo vi*. See 12.5.1.
- (b) In all countries, with certain verbs, listed at 12.6.4.
- (c) Sometimes as the object pronoun for *ustedes*, to denote respect. See 12.6.1.
- (d) Frequently when the subject of the verb is inanimate and the direct object is human, especially when the human object is reacting to the action described. See 12.6.2.
- (e) When the subject is impersonal *se* and the direct object is human. See 12.6.3.

12.2 Third-person object pronouns: basic rules

Beginners can apply the following scheme, which is based on the Academy's current preferences and is valid for all of Latin America and acceptable to most Spaniards. These rules will produce correct sentences in over 90% of cases.

Preferred third-person object pronouns (from the Academy's *Esbozo*. . . , 3.10.5c):

Singular	Direct object	Indirect object
masculine	<i>lo</i>	<i>le</i>
feminine	<i>la</i>	<i>le</i>

Plural	Direct object	Indirect object
masculine	<i>los</i>	<i>les</i>
feminine	<i>las</i>	<i>les</i>

Examples:

<i>Ángela vio a Antonio</i>	<i>lo vio</i>
Angela saw Antonio	she saw him
<i>Antonio vio a Ángela</i>	<i>la vio</i>
Antonio saw Angela	he saw her
<i>Vio el libro</i>	<i>lo vio</i>
(S)he saw the book	(s)he saw it
<i>Vio la casa</i>	<i>la vio</i>
(S)he saw the house	(s)he saw it
<i>María dijo hola a Juan</i>	<i>le dijo hola</i>
Maria said hello to Juan (and vice-versa)	she said hello to him/her
<i>Vio a los hombres</i>	<i>los vio</i>
(S)he saw the men	(s)he saw them
<i>Vio a las mujeres</i>	<i>las vio</i>
(S)he saw the women	(s)he saw them
<i>Vio los libros</i>	<i>los vio</i>
(S)he saw the books	(s)he saw them
<i>Vio las casas</i>	<i>las vio</i>
(S)he saw the houses	(s)he saw them
<i>Dijo hola a María y a José</i>	<i>les dijo hola</i>
(S)he said hello to María and José	(s)he said hello to them
<i>Dijo hola a María y a Ángela</i>	<i>les dijo hola</i>
(S)he said hello to Maria and Angela	(s)he said hello to them

Notes

(i) Standard European Spanish prefers the form *le* for a **human** male direct object: *le vi* 'I saw him', although *lo vi* is considered by the Academy to be the correct form and is much more common than in the past; see 12.5.1 for details. However, in the plural *los* is more common than *les* for male human direct objects and is generally preferred; see 12.5.2 for details.

(ii) *Usted/ustedes* 'you' (polite) take third-person object pronouns: *Doctora Smith, le aseguro que la llamé ayer* 'Dr Smith (fem.) I assure you I rang you/her yesterday', *Lo vi ayer* 'I saw him/it/you yesterday', *Le vi ayer* (Spain only) 'I saw you (masc.)/him yesterday', *Los vi ayer* 'I saw them/you yesterday', *Las vi ayer* 'I saw them/you (fem.) yesterday'.

12.3 Use of *le/les* as 'indirect object' pronouns: detailed rules

(*Le/les* are sometimes also used as direct object pronouns: see 12.5-12.6.)

Le/les are often described as third-person 'indirect object' pronouns (*pronombres de complemento indirecto*). However, 'indirect object' is a term that covers many different meanings, and the more general principle underlying the use of *le/les* seems to be the following:

***Lelles* replace any person or thing gaining from or losing by the action described in the verb phrase.**

The nature of these gains or losses must be inferred from the meaning of the verb phrase or from clues provided by context. Whatever departures from these examples they may hear, foreign students are advised to use *le/les* in the following contexts.

List A: Typical uses of *le/les*

Le can be translated 'him', 'her', 'it', 'you', *les* as 'you' or 'them'. The choice in the translations may be dictated by context, but in some cases it is arbitrary.

(a) Receiving or acquiring any thing, impression or sensation:

<i>Le di la carta</i>	I gave her/him/you the letter
<i>Voy a darle una mano de pintura</i>	I'll give it a coat of paint
<i>No le dije la verdad</i>	I didn't tell you/him/her the truth
<i>Les suministramos acero y petróleo</i>	We supply them steel and crude oil
<i>Ángel le alcanzó un cuchillo</i>	Angel handed him a knife
<i>Le tirábamos bolas de nieve</i>	We were throwing snowballs at her
<i>Le pusieron una inyección</i>	They gave him/her/you an injection
<i>Le echaron una sábana</i>	They threw a sheet over him
<i>Se le agrega queso rallado</i>	Grated cheese is added to it
<i>Se le pegó una brizna de hierba</i>	A blade of grass stuck to her
<i>Le valió una sonrisa</i>	It earned him a smile
<i>Su padre le contagió sus locuras</i>	His father infected him with his mad ways
<i>Les enseñé el camino</i>	I showed them the way
<i>Le tocó el premio gordo</i>	She got first prize
<i>Les corresponde la mitad</i>	They're/You're entitled to half
<i>Les interesa callarlo</i>	It's in their interest to keep it quiet
<i>Le convenía que fuera así</i>	It suited him that way
<i>No les es ventajoso</i>	It's not advantageous to them
<i>Esa chaqueta no le va</i>	That jacket doesn't suit him/her
<i>Las cosas le iban mal</i>	Things were going badly for her
<i>Le hemos lavado tres camisas</i>	We've washed three shirts for him
<i>No le pasó nada</i>	Nothing happened to him
<i>cuando se le sube el whisky</i>	when the whisky goes to her head
<i>Se le ocurrió llamar a la policía</i>	He had the idea of phoning the police
<i>No le parece mucho</i>	It doesn't seem much to him
<i>Le constaba que . . .</i>	It was a fact to him that . . .
<i>Le suena mal</i>	It sounds wrong to her
<i>Le da igual</i>	It's all the same to him
<i>La secretaria le cayó bien</i>	He took a liking to the secretary
<i>Le gusta la miel</i>	She/he/it likes honey
<i>Le agradó la respuesta</i>	The reply pleased her
<i>Les dolía</i>	It hurt/pained them
<i>Cuánto les pesaba</i>	How sorry they were

(b) Loss or removal from:

<i>Les han robado un millón de pesos</i>	They've stolen a million pesos from them/you
<i>Esto le ha quitado un peso de encima</i>	This has taken a weight off her mind
<i>Mario le ha quitado a Ana</i>	Mario's taken Ana away from him (N.B. personal <i>a</i>)
<i>Le he comprado un cuadro</i>	I've bought a picture from him
<i>Le están sacando una muela</i>	They're taking one of her teeth out

Le costó un dineral
Se le cae el pelo
Se le ha muerto un hijo
Se le pasa pronto
Le arrancaron la pistola

It cost her a fortune
 His hair's falling out
 A son of his has died
 She gets over it quickly
 They seized the pistol from him

(c) Sufficiency, insufficiency, lack, excess:

Les basta decir que sí
Le faltan mil pesos
Le faltaba un dedo meñique
Mil pesetas al día le alcanzaban para vivir

All they have to do is say 'yes'
 She's 1000 pesos short
 One of his little fingers was missing
 She could manage on 1000 ptas a day

(d) Requesting, requiring, ordering:

Le hicieron varias preguntas
Le pidieron sus señas
Les rogaron que se sentasen/sentaran
Les ordenaron rendirse
Le exigía un esfuerzo continuo

They asked her several questions
 They asked him his name and address
 They requested them to sit down
 They ordered them to surrender
 It required continuous effort from them

Note

Compare *Le mandó que comprara/comprase pan* 'He ordered her/him to buy bread' and *La mandó a comprar pan* 'He sent her to buy bread'.

(e) Numerous phrases involving *tener* plus an emotion (although the equivalent verbs, *respetar*, *temer*, etc. may take *lo/lal/los/las*):

Le tiene miedo
Su madre le tenía poco cariño
Le tiene ojeriza
Le tenías una envidia tremenda

He fears him/her/you
 His mother felt little fondness for him
 She has it in for him
 You were enormously envious of him

(f) Numerous set phrases consisting of *hacer* plus a noun:

El frío les hacía mucho daño
El chico le hizo una mueca
Mi nieto nunca les hacía caso
Tienes que hacerle frente a la realidad
Le hacía falta reflexionar

The cold did them a lot of harm
 The boy pulled a face at him
 My grandson never heeded them
 You have to face up to reality
 He/she needed to reflect

(g) To indicate persons or things affected by something done to a part of their body or to some intimate possession (for further details about this construction and for the omission of the possessive adjective with parts of the body and intimate possessions, see 8.3.4):

¡Le estás pisando los pies!
Los fríos le hielan los dedos
A esa edad se les ablanda el cerebro
Don Juan le acariciaba las mejillas
Los nervios le jugaban malas partidas
Se le ha hundido la moral
No le veo la gracia
Le he roto la camisa
Le dejaron las gafas hechas añicos (las gafas
 = Lat. Am. los anteojos)

You're treading on his feet
 The cold weather freezes her fingers
 Their brains go soft at that age
 Don Juan was stroking her cheeks
 His nerves were playing tricks on him
 Her morale has collapsed
 I don't see what's funny in it
 I've torn his shirt
 They shattered her glasses

(h) In a number of less easily classified cases which may all be perceived to convey ideas of 'giving', 'removing', 'benefiting', 'involving', 'affecting intimately':

<i>¿Qué le vamos a hacer?</i>	What can be done about it?
<i>No le hace</i> (Southern Cone; Spain <i>no tiene que ver</i>)	That's irrelevant
<i>¡Dale!</i>	Hit him! Go on! Get moving!
<i>Le agradezco</i>	I thank you
<i>El cura les</i> (also <i>los</i>) <i>aconsejaba que no lo hicieran/hiciesen</i>	The priest advised them not to do it
<i>Le encontraron mil pesos</i>	They found 1000 pesos on her
<i>La respuesta de su hija le afectó mucho</i> (lo or le possible in Lat. Am.)	His daughter's reply affected him a lot

Note

This multiplicity of meanings can give rise to ambiguities: *Le compré un vestido* 'I bought a dress from her/for her', *Cómprame algo* 'Buy something for/from me', *Ángel me robó una manzana* 'Ángel stole an apple from me/for me/on my behalf'. Context nearly always makes the sense plain, or the sentence can be recast: *Compró una calculadora para mí* 'He/she bought a calculator for me', etc.

12.4 Uses of *lo/las/los/las*

Lo/las/los/las are the third-person 'direct object' pronouns, 'direct' object understood here as the person or thing directly affected by a verb phrase but not 'losing' or 'gaining' in the ways described in List A above.

In the following list of examples it will be seen that even when dramatically affected by the verb phrase (as in 'they killed her'), the person or thing denoted by the pronoun is not actively involved as a participant in the action or as an interested party. In fact the condition of the pronoun is very often literally that of an object which merely has the action of the verb done to it.

List B: Contexts normally requiring *lo/las/los/las* (direct object)

The use of *lo* for human males in this list reflects standard Latin-American usage and the Academy's current recommendation. The second of the alternative forms reflects widespread but not obligatory usage in Spain. See 12.2 and 12.5.1 for discussion.

(a) Direct physical actions (although there are exceptions, like *Le pega* 'He beats him/her; see 12.6.4):

<i>Lolle interrogaron</i>	They interrogated him
<i>La operaron</i>	They operated on her
<i>El perro lo/le mordió</i>	The dog bit him
<i>Coge estos papeles y quémalos</i>	Take these papers and burn them
<i>A usted lo durmieron con algún mejunje en la sidra</i> (J.L. Borges, Argentina, dialogue; Spain <i>le</i>)	They put you to sleep with some potion in the cider
<i>Perdone, no quería molestarla</i>	Sorry, I didn't mean to bother you (to a female)
<i>Saca el carburador y límpialo</i>	Take out the carburettor and clean it
<i>—¿Y tu cámara? —La he perdido</i>	'What about your camera?' 'I've lost it'

(b) Verbs of perception – 'seeing', 'hearing', 'knowing', etc.:

<i>Al director no lo/le conozco personalmente</i>	I don't know the director personally
<i>La vi ayer en el mercado</i>	I saw her/you yesterday in the market
<i>Sabía que el ladrón estaba en la habitación porque lo/le oí</i>	I knew the thief was in the room because I heard him
<i>El agente lo/le miraba</i>	The policeman was looking at him

(c) Praise, blame, admiration, love, hatred and other actions denoting attitudes towards a person or thing:

<i>Sus profesores lolle alaban</i>	His teachers praise him/you
<i>A las monjas las envidio mucho</i>	I envy nuns a lot
<i>Lolle admiro profundamente</i>	I admire him deeply
<i>Su marido la adora</i>	Her/Your husband adores her
<i>La considero una amiga</i>	I consider her/you a friend

(For some Latin Americans *Lo quieren* = 'They want him', *Le quieren* = 'They love him'.)

(d) 'Naming', 'nominating', 'describing' (but see 12.6.4 for the verb *llamar*):

<i>Los denominaron "los decadentes"</i>	They named them 'the decadents'
<i>Lolle nombraron alcalde</i>	They nominated him mayor
<i>Las describió en términos despectivos</i>	He described them (fem.) in pejorative terms
<i>Lo calificó de tragedia</i>	He described it as a tragedy

(e) Many other actions done to things or persons but not 'involving' them in the ways described in List A, 12.3:

<i>La crisis energética no la podrá solucionar ningún gobierno elegido</i>	The energy crisis won't be solved by any elected government
<i>El Canciller los recibirá a las siete y cuarto</i>	The Chancellor will receive you/them at 7.15
<i>Este país no hay quien sepa gobernarlo</i>	There's no one who knows how to govern this country
<i>Habrà que defenderlos</i>	We'll have to defend them
<i>No pude convencerla</i>	I couldn't convince her
<i>Yo intentaba evitarlos</i>	I was trying to avoid them
etc.	

Notes

(i) *Lolla/los/las* agree in gender with the noun they replace. If they do not replace a specific noun, *lo* is used: *Dijo que llegaría a las siete, pero no lo creo* 'He said he'd arrive at seven, but I don't believe it', *Esto no lo aguanta nadie* 'No one can stand this'. This neuter use of *lo* is discussed at 7.4.

(ii) The first and second-person pronouns *me/te/nos/os* could be used in any of the above sentences in place of the third-person pronoun, provided the result makes sense.

12.5 The *le/lo* controversy: general remarks

Interminable controversy surrounds the use of *le* as a *direct object* pronoun for humans.

Beginners may follow the scheme given in 12.2, but they will soon come across at least some of the variants described hereafter. Some of these variants are local and dialectal and need not concern foreign students. But some of them are basic features of Spanish, particularly the European use (described at 12.5.1) of *le* as a direct object pronoun for human males, and the use of *le* for *lol/la* everywhere in certain types of sentence (12.6).

Section 12.5 describes regional variations. Section 12.6 describes certain subtleties in the use of *le* and *lo* that are found in the best written and spoken styles throughout the Spanish-speaking world.

12.5.1 *Le* for *lo* in Spain (*leísmo*): further details

The standard language of Spain, i.e. the variety used in the media and by most educated speakers in Madrid and central regions, favours *le vi* for *lo vi* when the sentence means 'I saw him' as opposed to 'I saw it':

—¿Has visto a Miguel?	'Have you seen Miguel?'
—No, no <i>le</i> he visto	'No, I haven't seen him'
—¿Has visto mi boli?	'Have you seen my ball-point pen?'
—No, no <i>lo</i> he visto	'No, I haven't seen it'

There is much disagreement about this phenomenon, and the Academy has itself changed its mind on the subject several times in the last 150 years and has now come round to advocating the Latin-American preference for *lo* for both human males and masculine non-human direct objects. But in the face of massive resistance in Spain the Academy officially 'tolerates' forms like *Le vi* for 'I saw him'.¹

Students may still encounter a certain amount of anti-*loísta* prejudice in Spain: *leísmo* is very deeply entrenched in central regions and many Spaniards still claim that *lo vi* applied to a male human being sounds vaguely sub-standard or regional. Students will also note much inconsistency in the use of *le* or *lo* with reference to human males in Spain, *lo* being more frequent in the South and increasingly common, it seems, in all circles.

The Academy's current dislike of *le* as a 'direct object' pronoun, based as it is on an over-rigorous distinction between 'direct' and 'indirect' objects, does not in fact do justice to the subtlety of the Spanish language on either continent. The following pages attempt to provide a succinct account of the complexities of the problem. For a full discussion see E. García (1975).

12.5.2 *Les* for *los* in Spain

Use of *les* for *los*, e.g. *Les vi* 'I saw them' (masc.) is also frequently heard in colloquial language in Spain, especially in Castile, when the pronoun refers to human males, but this construction is less common than *Los vi* and is in fact not 'tolerated' by the Academy or favoured in writing. Seco (1992), 164, says of *No les he visto* applied to human males that 'literary language does not generally admit it'. Use of *les* for *los* sounds old-fashioned to some Spaniards, but it is nevertheless quite often seen in writing:

<i>Les llevaron a una casa donde estuvieron mucho rato esperando</i> (Juan Benet, Spain, for <i>los llevaron</i> . . .)	They took them to a house where they waited for a long time
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12.5.3 *Le* for *la* in Spain: regional usage

Speakers from North-Western Spain, especially Navarre and the Basque provinces, habitually use *le* for female human direct objects as well as for males: *Le vi* = both 'I saw him' and 'I saw her', *Lo vi* (masc.) and *La vi* (fem.) 'I saw it'. This usage sometimes appears in literature and is generally accepted as a regional variant. The same phenomenon is sporadically heard elsewhere, e.g. in Valencia and in Paraguay.

¹ The Academy now prefers *lo* on historical grounds. The argument in the *Esbozo* is that since *lo* comes from the Classical Latin accusative *illum* and *le* from the dative *illi*, 'I saw him' should be *lo vi* in Modern Spanish and 'I said to him' *le dije*.

12.5.4 La for le (a ella) in Spain (laismo)

Older speakers in Madrid and speakers in the countryside of central Spain often use *la* for the indirect object pronoun to refer to a female or feminine noun:

?Yo *la* dije la verdad (for Yo le dije la verdad) I told her the truth
 ?Yo *la* alabo el gusto (M. Delibes, Spain, dialogue; for Yo le alabo el gusto) I praise her taste

School-teachers have waged a long war against this type of *laismo* and it is now apparently disappearing in the speech of Madrid. It is common in pre-twentieth century literature. Foreign students should avoid it.

12.5.5 Lo for le in Latin America

Extreme *loísmo*, i.e. use of *lo* for the indirect object, is reported in popular speech in many parts of Latin America: Kany, p. 137, cites from Guatemala *Ya no tarda en llegar. ¿Quiere hablarlo?* 'He won't be long now. Do you want to speak to him?' (for *hablarle*). The same phenomenon is occasionally heard in dialects in Spain. It should not be imitated.

12.5.6 Le for lo/la applied to inanimate objects in Spain

In familiar speech in Madrid and in pre-twentieth century texts, one finds *le* used as the direct object pronoun even for inanimate nouns: ?No *le* he leído todavía 'I haven't read it [el libro] yet', ?Unos niegan el hecho, otros *le* afirman 'Some deny the fact, others assert it' (B. Feijoo, mid-eighteenth century).

This extreme *leísmo*, endorsed by the Academy until the 1850s, is nowadays considered sub-standard or dialectal unless it is a rare instance of genuine personification. However, it occasionally appears in written language, cf. . . . *hacen que San Prudencio y otros obispos maldigan al pueblo y le destruyan* (J. Caro Baroja, Spain) ' . . . they make Saint Prudentius and other bishops curse the village and destroy it'.

12.6 Le used for human direct objects throughout the Spanish-speaking world

Even when all the regional and dialectal factors are excluded, *le* is still found as a direct object pronoun in the best styles in Spain where *la/las* would be expected, and in Latin America where *lo/los* or *la/las* would be the predicted forms.

This problem arises because a simple distinction between 'direct' and 'indirect' objects does not hold in Spanish. This is demonstrated in the translation of the following sentences, in both of which 'her' is the *direct* object of 'flattered':

- (a) 'He flattered her'
- (b) 'The joke flattered her'

We expect the Spanish translation to be

Él *la* halagó
 La broma *la* halagó

and this indeed is what many native speakers accept. However, many speakers, Spanish and Latin-American, translate (b) as *La broma le halagó*, this being the more common form in educated speech (in a questionnaire given to 28 Spaniards from the Madrid region, 90% preferred *le* in the second example and 87% preferred *la* in the first; García, 1975, reports similar results for Buenos Aires).

As a result, although the rules for the use of *le/les* already given at 12.3 and the rules for *lo/la/los/las* given at 12.4 will enable foreign learners to form sentences that are acceptable to the majority of native speakers, they do not always explain the actual use of these pronouns.

12.6.1 *Le* to denote respect

In certain areas some speakers use *le* for human direct objects as a mark of respect. Spaniards who say *lo vi* for 'I saw him' may prefer *le vi* for the polite *usted* form, 'I saw you'.

Argentine informants were convinced that they would say *No quería molestarle* 'I didn't mean to bother you', speaking to their boss, but *molestarlo* when speaking about him. Colombian informants said *molestarlo* in both cases.

Examples of *le* used with *usted* are:

¡Buenas tardes, hijitos! Les encuentro muy alegres (A. Buero Vallejo, Spain, dialogue)

Good afternoon, my dears! I find you very cheerful

Si le molesta el humo, señora, lo apago

If the smoke troubles you, Señora, I'll put it out

but

Lo apagué porque la molestaba el humo

I put it out because the smoke was bothering her

Note

'Respect' may imply that the object is active. García (1975) reports that Buenos Aires speakers differentiate *Le llevaron al hospital* and *Lo llevaron al hospital*, 'They took him to the hospital', the former implying that the patient is walking or cooperative. For Colombian informants only *lo llevaron* was possible.

12.6.2 *Le/les* preferred when subject is inanimate

Le/le are often the preferred direct object pronouns when they denote a human being and the subject of the verb is inanimate². This statement applies both to Spain and to Latin America. Compare the following sentences: *La espera su marido* 'Her husband's waiting for her' and *Le espera una catástrofe* 'A catastrophe awaits her/him'.

Le is especially preferred when the human direct object is reacting emotionally, as in sentences like 'It surprised him', 'It shocked her', 'He doesn't

² García notes of Buenos Aires speakers that whereas only 14% of a sample would translate 'he convinced him' as *él le convenció* (the rest say *él lo convenció*), 54% say *este color no le convence* 'this colour doesn't convince him'. We found that of 23 educated Spaniards, mostly from Madrid, only 20% used *le* in *yo la convencí* 'I convinced her', but 70% preferred *le* in *Si a tu suegra este color no le convence, que elija otro* 'If this colour doesn't convince your mother-in-law, let her choose another'.

know what's in store for him'. The phenomenon is vividly illustrated in this Peruvian sentence where *le* reflects an inanimate subject (a tooth) and a human direct object, but the *lo* reflects both a human subject (the dentist) and a human direct object:

Si [la muela] le molesta mucho, lo puedo atender hoy mismo (Peruvian dentist to male patient, from *Varietades*, 238)

If it [the tooth] is troubling you a lot, I can attend to you today

Further examples (all Latin American):

Él se miraba la sangre que le había salpicado (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)

He looked at the blood that had spattered him

Sin embargo, le molestaba encararse con Parodi (J.L. Borges, Argentina)

Yet it troubled him to come face to face with Parodi

Durante mucho tiempo le angustió esa novedad (E. Sábato, Argentina)

For a long while that new turn of events (lit. 'novelty') filled him with anguish

. . . lo que más le preocupaba de la muerte al doctor Urbino . . . (G. García Márquez, Colombia)

What worried doctor Urbino most about the death . . .

A number of verbs often (but not invariably) take *le/les* when their subject is inanimate. The following examples illustrate this tendency:

Le acometió una duda

A doubt assailed him/her

La angustia le acompañaba siempre

Anguish went with her always

Yo la acompañaba siempre

I always went with her

A Consuelo le admiró que no contestase

It surprised Consuelo that he did not reply

A Consuelo la admiro mucho

I admire Consuelo a great deal

El dolor que le afligía . . .

The pain that afflicted him/her . . .

No sabe la suerte que le aguarda

He/she doesn't know the fate that's waiting for him/her

Yo la aguardé (likewise *esperar*)

I awaited her

No le alcanzan mil pesetas para vivir

1000 ptas aren't enough for him/her to live on

No pude alcanzarla

I couldn't catch up with her

El gas les hace reír

The gas makes them laugh

Yo los haré reír

I'll make them laugh

And similarly such verbs as the following: *asustar* 'to frighten', *ayudar* 'to help', *calmar* 'to calm', *coger* 'to catch', *complacer* 'to please', *convencer* 'to convince', *distraer* 'to amuse'/'to distract', *encantar* 'to enchant'/'to charm', *estorbar* 'to impede'/'to get in the way of', *exasperar* 'to exasperate', *fascinar* 'to fascinate', *fatigar* 'to fatigue', *indignar* 'to outrage', *inquietar* 'to worry', *molestar* 'to trouble', *preocupar* 'to worry', *seducir* 'to charm', *tranquilizar* 'to calm', etc.

Note

It must be remembered that many native speakers do not exploit all the potential of these subtleties, so they will often disagree about the correct pronoun to use in any one context. Moreover, strongly *loísta* speakers, e.g. Colombians, may use *lo/la* where others prefer *le*.

12.6.3 Preference for *le/les* after impersonal or reflexive *se*

If impersonal (or, occasionally, reflexive *se*) precedes a third-person pronoun there is a widespread tendency to prefer *le/les* as the direct object pronouns when the object is human.

<i>Se le notaba tímida y cortada</i> (L. Goytisolo, Spain)	One could see she was timid and embarrassed
<i>Entonces se le leerá como se le debió leer siempre</i> . . . (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, essay on Camus)	Then he will be read as he always should have been read . . .
<i>Hola doctor, ¡qué bien se le ve!</i> (Peruvian speaker, <i>Variedades</i> 238, lo expected)	Hello doctor, you're looking well!
<i>Licha se le prendió de la solapa</i> (C. Fuentes, Mexico)	Licha pulled him to her by his lapels
<i>Licha se le volvió a abrazar</i> (<i>ibid.</i>)	Licha put her arms round him again/Licha drew him to herself again

Notes

(i) Use of *lelles* for the direct object is here a device for removing some of the ambiguities that arise in Spanish from the scarcity of object pronoun forms.

Use of *lo/la* after *se* invites the interpretation of *se* as a substitute for *le* by the rule that two object pronouns beginning with *l* cannot occur side-by-side (see 11.13.1 for discussion). Thus *Le cortó la cabeza* 'He cut his head off' is pronominalized *Se la cortó* 'He cut it off (him)' (for the expected **Le la cortó*). For this reason *Se la notaba pálida* suggests 'He noticed that his/her/their hand, face, head, cheek, chin (or some other grammatically feminine noun) was pale'; *Se le notaba* . . . shows that the object is a person. Compare the following examples in which *se* replaces *le* and the object is not human: *Se lo cobró* 'He took it off him/her/you', *Se la vendió a ella* 'He sold it (fem.) to her', *Se lo leyó a su padre* '(S)he/read it to his/her father'.

(ii) In Spain *le* is occasionally seen even for non-human direct objects after impersonal *se*, although in this example *los* would have been more usual: *A los esperpentos de Valle-Inclán siempre se les ha considerado ejemplos de expresionismo español* (A. Buero Vallejo, Spain) 'Valle-Inclán's *esperpentos* have always been considered examples of Spanish expressionism'.

(iii) Use of *la* after impersonal *se* to refer to a female and, in Latin America, of *lo* to refer to a male, is not, however, impossible: *La luz se apagó y apenas se lo veía* (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru) 'The light went out and one could scarcely see him'.

(iv) The verb *llevarse* seems always to prefer *lo* for a direct object pronoun, human or not, even in Spain: *A mi padre me lo voy a llevar a pasar las vacaciones conmigo* 'I'm going to take my father with me on holiday' (*me le* is possible in Spain but less frequent).

12.6.4 *Le/les* preferred with certain verbs

The following verbs take *le* for their direct object pronoun:

Gustar/agradar/complacer/placer 'to please', and all verbs of similar or opposite meaning: *Le gusta la miel* 'He/she/it likes honey', *Le disgustaba encontrarse sola* 'She disliked finding herself alone'.

Importar 'to matter'/'to concern', *concernir* 'to concern' and verbs of similar meaning: *No les importa que no tengan dinero* 'They don't care that they have no money'; *Eso no le concierne a usted* 'That doesn't concern you'.

Interesar: *Reiteró que sólo un hombre le interesaba en el mundo* 'She repeated that only one man in the world interested her'.

Tirar, when it means 'to pull' rather than 'throw' or 'throw away': *La amiga le tiraba de la mano* (Javier Marías, Spain) 'Her friend was pulling her by the hand'. Compare *Lo/La tiró* 'He threw it/threw it away'.

Tocar, when it means 'to be the turn of' rather than 'to touch': compare *Le toca a usted, señora* 'It's your turn, Señora' and *La tocó a usted, señora* 'He touched you, Señora'.

Creer 'to believe', when its object is human: *Yo no le creo, señora*, 'Señora, I don't believe you', but *Sí que lo creo* 'I do believe it'.

Discutir 'argue'/'to discuss' when it means 'answer back': *¿Desde cuándo le discutía?* 'Since when had she been answering him back?' (M. Vargas Llosa, Peruvian dialogue).

Enseñar when its object is human: *Les enseñaba* 'He taught/showed them' but *Lo enseñaba* 'He showed it'.

Entender 'to understand' when its object is human: *No le entiendo* 'I don't understand him/her/you' but *Lo entiendo* 'I understand it'.

Llamar: many speakers prefer *le/les* when the verb means 'to give a name': *Todo el mundo le llama "Chelo"*, 'Everybody calls her "Chelo"', *Se nos informó en un "briefing", que le llaman* (Cuban TV interview) 'We were told in a "briefing", as they call it'. (For christening, educated usage says *Le pusieron María de nombre* 'They called her "Maria"'.) *La/llo(le)/los/las* are the usual object pronouns used when the verb means 'phone' or 'call to': *Yo la llamaré apenas haya alguna novedad* 'I'll call you/her as soon as there's news'.

Obedecer 'to obey': *¿Le han obedecido a Mademoiselle Durand?* 'Did you obey Mlle Durand?' (E. Poniatowska, Mexico, dialogue), although the verb is also found with *la/lo*.

Pegar 'to beat': [*Lalita*] *te contó que le pegué* (dialogue in M. Vargas Llosa, Peru) 'Lalita told you I hit her', *Dicen que le pega mucho* 'They say he hits him/her/you a lot'. *Pegarlo/pegarla* etc. is assumed to mean 'to stick (i.e. glue) it'.

Preocupar, inquietar 'to worry': *Le preocupa* 'It worries him/her/you'.

Recordar when it means 'to remind'. Cf. *La recuerdo* 'I remember her' but *Recuérdale que viene esta noche* 'Remind her/him that she/he's coming tonight'.

12.6.5 *Le/les* in double accusative constructions

In *Juan la oyó* 'John heard her' *la* is normal since 'she' is not 'actively participant' in any of the ways described at 12.3, List A. In 'John heard her sing an aria' there are two objects, one, 'aria', less active than the other, 'her'. Spanish speakers often use *le* to denote the more active object: *Juan le oyó cantar un aria* (*la* occurs, particularly in Spain, but may be rejected by educated speakers), *Su padre siempre le/la obliga a decir la verdad* 'Her father always obliges her to tell the truth' (*le* preferred but not obligatory).

Notes

(i) *Ver* normally takes *lo* (in Spain *le*)/*la/los/las*: *Yo me quedé con ella porque quería verla firmar el contrato* 'I stayed with her because I wanted to see her sign the contract'.

(ii) *Dejar* 'to let' may elicit *la* (and in Latin America *lo*) – *La dejaron hacerlo* 'They let her do it'. *Permitir* takes *le*: *Le permitieron hacerlo*.

12.7 Pronouns with verbs of motion

For *Acude a ella* 'He goes to her', *Se le acercó* 'She approached him', see 11.8.

12.8 'Resumptive' or 'echoing' *lo* with *ser* and *estar*

The predicate of *ser, estar, parecer* is resumed or 'echoed' by *lo*:

—*Parece alemana*

'She looks German'

—*Lo es*

'She is'

See 7.4 note (i) for details.

12.9 Se for le/les when they are followed by lo/la/los/las

For the obligatory replacement of *le* by *se* when it precedes *lo/la/los/las*, as in *Se lo di* 'I gave it to him' (never **le lo di*), see 11.13.1.

12.10 Latin-American se los for se lo

For the colloquial Latin American form ?*Se los dije* 'I told them/you' (for the standard *Se lo dije a ellos/ellas/ustedes*), see 11.13.2.

12.11 Le for les

For the universal colloquial tendency to use *le* for *les* when the latter is a 'redundant' pronoun, see 11.16.3.

13

Forms of Verbs

Contents of chapter:

For ease of reference certain constantly required information is set out in separate Tables as follows:

Overview of Spanish verb forms	Table 1	p.197
Conjugation of regular verbs	Table 2	p.199
Regular spelling changes	Table 3	p.200
Conjugation of <i>ser</i>	Table 4	p.202
Conjugation of <i>estar</i>	Table 5	p.203
Conjugation of <i>haber</i> ¹	Table 6	p.204
Compound tenses	Table 7	p.205

Argentine *vos* forms are mentioned in this chapter since they are normally used in educated speech in that country. *Voseo* is discussed in more detail at 11.3.1.

13.1 General remarks about the Spanish verb system

The following remarks may show that the Spanish verb system is less complicated than it seems.

13.1.1 The three conjugations

All Spanish verbs belong to one of three conjugations distinguished by the vowel of the infinitive: (1) *-ar* (2) *-er* (3) *-ir*, or *-ír* in the case of the half dozen verbs listed at 13.1.4f.

The endings of verbs of the *-ir* conjugation are the same as those of the *-er* conjugations except for:

- (a) *vosotros* forms of the imperative: *comed* 'eat' but *vivid* 'live';
- (b) *nosotros* forms of the present indicative: *comemos* 'we eat' but *vivimos* 'we live';
- (c) *vosotros* form of the present indicative: *coméis* 'you eat' but *vivís* 'you live';
- (d) *vos* forms of the present indicative in those countries, e.g. Argentina and most of Central America, where this pronoun is used instead of *tú*. *Vos comés* 'you eat' (= *tú comes*) but *vos vivís* 'you live' (= *tú vives*);

¹ Auxiliary verb used for creating compound tenses. It also translates 'there is'/'there are'; see Chapter 30.

(e) forms based on the infinitive, i.e. the future and the conditional: *comerá* 'he'll eat', *vivirá* 'he'll live', *comería* 'he'd eat' but *viviría* 'he'd live'.

The full conjugation of three typical regular verbs in *-ar*, *-er* and *-ir* is shown in Table 2, p.199.

13.1.2 Regular spelling changes

There are predictable spelling changes that affect all verbs. They are discussed at 13.2.2 and the most important are shown in Table 3, p.200.

13.1.3 Irregular verbs : general remarks

Only about two dozen Spanish verbs (not counting compound verbs formed from them) are traditionally defined as truly 'irregular'. These are:

<i>andar</i>	to walk	13.3.5
<i>caber</i>	to fit into	13.3.8
<i>caer</i>	to fall	13.3.9
<i>dar</i>	to give	13.3.15
<i>decir</i>	to say	13.3.16
<i>estar</i>	to be	see Table 5, p.203
<i>haber</i>	auxiliary verb or 'there is'/'there are'	see Table 6, p.204
<i>hacer</i>	to do/to make	13.3.22
<i>ir</i>	to go	13.3.23
<i>oír</i>	to hear	13.3.28
<i>poder</i>	to be able	13.3.33
<i>poner</i>	to put	13.3.34
<i>producir</i>	to produce (and all verbs ending in <i>-ducir</i>)	13.3.36
<i>querer</i>	to want	13.3.37
<i>saber</i>	to know	13.3.41
<i>salir</i>	to go out	13.3.42
<i>ser</i>	to be	see Table 4, p.202
<i>tener</i>	to have	13.3.45
<i>valer</i>	to be worth	13.3.47
<i>venir</i>	to come	13.3.48
<i>ver</i>	to see	13.3.49

13.1.4 Radical changing verbs

'Radical changing verbs' are numerous: several hundred are in everyday use, although many of them are derived from more familiar verbs, e.g. *descontar* 'to discount', conjugated like *contar* 'to count'/'to tell a story'.

These verbs have regular endings, but a vowel in the stem is modified in some forms, cf. *contar* 'to tell a story' > *cuenta* 'he tells', *perder* 'to lose' > *pierdo* 'I lose', *sentir* 'to feel' > *siente* 'he feels' > *sintió* 'he felt', etc.

Grammarians have traditionally been reluctant to call these verbs 'irregular', but they are certainly not regular in the sense that nothing about their infinitive shows that they are of this type. Compare *renovar* 'to renovate', which is a radical changing verb, and *innovar* 'to innovate' which is not, or *atender* 'to attend to', radical changing, and *pretender* 'to claim', regular. Radical changing verbs are listed at 13.4.

A few verbs are uncertain or have become regular. These include:

cimentar 'to cement', like *cerrar* or, more usually, regular

derrocar 'to overthrow', nowadays regular
mentar 'to mention', educated usage may still conjugate it like *cerrar*
derrengar 'to twist', nowadays regular
plegar 'to fold', like *cerrar* or optionally regular

Note also the following:

regular		if conjugated like
<i>apostar</i>	to post a sentry	<i>contar</i> ; to bet
<i>aterrar</i>	to terrorize	<i>cerrar</i> ; to level/raze to the ground
<i>asolar</i>	to parch	<i>contar</i> ; to level/raze to ground ²

The following list shows the common types of radical changing verbs and a selection of verbs that occur constantly and should be learned first.

A few of these verbs show other irregularities, so they should all be checked against the list at 13.4.

Commonly occurring Radical changing verbs

(a) Conjugated like *contar* 'to tell'/'to count' (13.3.14):

<i>acordarse de</i>	to remember	<i>encontrar</i>	to find/meet
<i>acostarse</i>	to go to bed	<i>esforzarse</i>	to make an effort
<i>apostar</i>	to bet	<i>mostrar</i>	to show
<i>aprobar</i>	to approve/pass an exam	<i>probar</i>	to prove/try
<i>avergonzarse</i>	to be ashamed		(i.e. 'sample', 'test')
<i>colarse</i>	to slip through/gatecrash	<i>recordar</i>	to remember/remind
<i>colgar</i>	to hang	<i>renovar</i>	to renew
<i>comprobar</i>	to check	<i>rodar</i>	to roll
<i>consolar</i>	to console	<i>soltar</i>	to release/let out
<i>costar</i>	to cost	<i>sonar</i>	to sound
<i>demostrar</i>	to demonstrate	<i>soñar</i>	to dream
	(a fact, technique)	<i>tronar</i>	to thunder
<i>desaprobar</i>	to disapprove	<i>volar</i>	to fly

(b) Conjugated like *cerrar* 'to close' (13.3.11):

<i>acertar</i>	to get right/hit the mark	<i>helar</i>	to freeze ³
<i>apretar</i>	to squeeze/tighten	<i>manifestarse</i>	to demonstrate
<i>atravesar</i>	to cross		(i.e. protest)
<i>calentar</i>	to heat	<i>negar</i>	to deny
<i>comenzar</i>	to begin	<i>nevar</i>	to snow
<i>confesar</i>	to confess	<i>pensar</i>	to think
<i>despertar(se)</i>	to wake up	<i>recomendar</i>	to recommend
<i>empezar</i>	to begin	<i>sentarse</i>	to sit down
<i>encerrar</i>	to lock in/shut in	<i>temblar</i>	to tremble
<i>enterrar</i>	to bury	<i>tropezar</i>	to stumble
<i>gobernar</i>	to govern		

(c) Conjugated like *mover* 'to move' (13.3.27):

<i>desenvolverse</i>	to develop	<i>disolver</i>	to dissolve
<i>devolver</i>	to give back	<i>doler</i>	to hurt

² The regular form is becoming standardized for both meanings.

³ Used of liquids. *Congelar* (regular) means 'to freeze food products'.

<i>envolver</i>	to wrap up	<i>resolver</i>	to resolve
<i>llover</i>	to rain	<i>soler</i>	to be in the habit of . . . (+ infinitive)
<i>morder</i>	to bite	<i>volver(se)</i>	to return/become, etc.
<i>oler</i>	to smell (see 13.3.29)		
<i>remover</i>	to stir up/remove (Lat. Am.)		

(d) Conjugated like *perder* 'to lose' (13.3.31):

<i>atender</i>	to attend (i.e. pay attention)	<i>extenderse</i>	to extend/stretch (over a distance)
<i>defender</i>	to defend	<i>tender a</i>	to tend to
<i>encender</i>	to light/set fire to		
<i>entender</i>	to understand		

(e) Conjugated like *pedir* 'to ask for' (13.3.30):

<i>competir</i>	to compete	<i>impedir</i>	to hinder/impede
<i>concebir</i>	to conceive	<i>medir</i>	to measure
<i>conseguir</i>	to achieve/manage to	<i>perseguir</i>	to persecute/chase
<i>corregir</i>	to correct	<i>rendirse</i>	to surrender
<i>derretirse</i>	to melt	<i>repetir</i>	to repeat
<i>despedir</i>	to fire (i.e. dismiss from job); <i>despedirse de</i> to say goodbye to	<i>reñir</i>	to scold (see 13.3.39)
<i>elegir</i>	to elect/choose	<i>seguir</i>	to follow
<i>gemir</i>	to groan	<i>servir</i>	to serve/be useful
		<i>vestir(se)</i>	to dress

(f) Conjugated like *reír*⁴ 'to laugh' (13.3.38):

<i>desleír(se)</i>	to dissolve/melt	<i>(re)freír</i>	to fry
<i>engreírse</i>	to grow conceited	<i>sonreír</i>	to smile

(g) Conjugated like *sentir* 'to feel' (13.3.43):

<i>advertir</i>	to warn	<i>herir</i>	to wound
<i>arrepentirse</i>	to repent	<i>interferir</i>	to interfere
<i>consentir</i>	to consent	<i>invertir</i>	to invest
<i>convertir</i>	to convert; <i>convertirse en</i> to turn into	<i>mentir</i>	to tell lies
<i>desmentir</i>	to deny	<i>preferir</i>	to prefer
<i>dissentir</i>	to dissent	<i>referirse a</i>	to refer to
<i>divertir(se)</i>	to amuse (oneself)	<i>sugerir</i>	to suggest

(h) *dormir* 'to sleep' and *morir* 'to die' (13.3.18).**(i)** *jugar* 'to play' (13.3.24).**(j)** *adquirir* 'to acquire' (13.3.3).**(k)** Conjugated like *discernir* 'to discern' (13.3.17).

<i>cernirse</i>	to hover/loom (<i>cerner</i> , conjugated like <i>perder</i> , means the same)
<i>concernir</i>	to concern (third-person only)

⁴ In fact conjugated like *pedir*, although the absence of the consonant obscures this.

13.1.5 Forms of the present indicative

The endings of the present indicative of regular verbs and of all but a few irregular verbs are:

-ar conjugation:	-o	-as	-a	-amos	-áis	-an
-er conjugation:	-o	-es	-e	-emos	-éis	-en
-ir conjugation:	-o	-es	-e	-imos	-ís	-en

However, there are numerous verbs in the *-er* and *-ir* conjugations in which the first-person singular ending is attached to an irregular stem, e.g. *producir* 'to produce' > *produzco* 'I produce', *poner* 'to put' > *pongo* 'I put', etc. These must be learned separately.

A few irregular verbs have a first-person singular ending in *-y*: *dar* > *doy*, *estar* > *estoy*, *ir* > *voy*, *ser* > *soy*.

Argentine *vos* forms are made by dropping any unstressed *i* from the ending of the European Spanish *vosotros* form: *vosotros habláis* > *vos hablás* 'you speak', *vosotros teméis* > *vos temés* 'you fear', *vosotros sois* > *vos sos* 'you are', *vosotros vivís* > *vos vivís* 'you live', *vosotros decís* > *vos decís* 'you say'.

The uses of the present indicative are discussed at 14.3.

13.1.6 Forms of the imperfect indicative

The endings of the imperfect indicative are:

-ar verbs:	-aba	-abas	-aba	-ábamos	-abais	-aban
-er and ir verbs:	-ía	-ías	-ía	-íamos	-íais	-ían

These endings are added to the stem left after removing the infinitive ending. There are three exceptions:

ser to be:	era	eras	era	éramos	erais	eran
ir to go:	iba	ibas	iba	íbamos	ibais	iban
ver to see: (instead of the expected * <i>vía</i> , * <i>vías</i> , etc.)	veía	veías	veía	veíamos	veíais	veían

In Argentina the pronoun *vos* takes the standard *tú* endings: *vos ibas* 'you were going', *vos decías* 'you were saying', etc.

The uses of the imperfect indicative are discussed at 14.5.

13.1.7 Forms of the preterite

The preterite of all regular verbs and of most radical-changing verbs is formed by adding the following endings to the stem left after removing the *-ar*, *-er* or *-ir* of the infinitive:

-ar verbs:	-é	-aste	-ó	-amos	-asteis	-aron
-er and -ir verbs:	-í	-iste	-ió	-imos	-isteis	-ieron

However, the third-person plural ending is *-eron* in the case of:

decir:	<i>dijeron</i>
ser:	<i>fuleron</i>
traer:	<i>trajeron</i>
all verbs whose infinitive ends in -ducir:	<i>condujeron, produjeron</i>

Verbs whose infinitive ends in *-ñer*, *-ñir* or *-llir* also lose the *i* in the third-person singular and third-person plural endings. See 13.2.2f.

Most of the irregular verbs listed at 13.1.3 have an irregular preterite stem and many of them do not have a stressed final vowel in the endings. *Hacer* 'to do' and *caber* 'to fit into' are typical:

<i>hice</i>	<i>hicimos</i>	<i>cupe</i>	<i>cupimos</i>
<i>hiciste</i>	<i>hicisteis</i>	<i>cupiste</i>	<i>cupisteis</i>
<i>hizo</i>	<i>hicieron</i>	<i>cupo</i>	<i>cupieron</i>

Verbs conjugated like *sentir* 'to feel', *pedir* 'to ask', and *dormir* 'to sleep' have irregularities in the third person of the preterite:

<i>sintió</i>	<i>sintieron</i>	<i>pidió</i>	<i>pidieron</i>	<i>durmió</i>	<i>durmieron</i>
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In Argentina the endings corresponding to the pronoun *vos* are the same as for *tú* in standard Spanish.

The uses of the preterite are discussed at 14.4.

13.1.8 The future and the conditional

The endings of the future and conditional tenses are identical for all verbs, regular and irregular:

Future:	-é	-ás	-á	-emos	-éis	-án
Conditional:	-ía	-ías	-ía	-íamos	-íais	-ían

The endings corresponding to Argentine *vos* are the same as for *tú*. These endings are always added to the infinitive except in the cases of the following twelve verbs:

Infinitive	Future stem	Infinitive	Future stem
<i>caber</i> to fit in	<i>cabr-</i>	<i>querer</i> to want	<i>querr-</i>
<i>decir</i> to say	<i>dir-</i>	<i>saber</i> to know	<i>sabr-</i>
<i>haber</i>	<i>habr-</i>	<i>salir</i> to go out	<i>saldr-</i>
<i>hacer</i> to do/make	<i>har-</i>	<i>tener</i> to have	<i>tendr-</i>
<i>poder</i> to be able	<i>podr-</i>	<i>valer</i> to be worth	<i>valdr-</i>
<i>poner</i> to put	<i>pondr-</i>	<i>venir</i> to come	<i>vendr-</i>

The use of the future and conditional forms is discussed at 14.6 and 14.7.

13.1.9 Forms of the present subjunctive

The endings of the present subjunctive are easily memorized:

-ar verbs take the endings of the present indicative of regular *-er* verbs except that the first-person *-o* is replaced by *-e*.

-er and *-ir* verbs take the endings of the present indicative of regular *-ar*

verbs, except that first-person *-o* is replaced by *-a*:

-ar verbs:	-e	-es	-e	-emos	-éis	-en
-er and -ir verbs:	-a-	-as	-a	-amos	-áis	-an

As far as regular verbs and the great majority of irregular verbs are concerned, the present subjunctive endings are added to the stem left after removing the *-o* of the first-person present indicative: e.g. *vengo* 'I come' > *venga*, *conduzco* 'I drive' > *conduzca*, *quepo* 'there's room for me' > *quepa* (from *caber*, 13.3.8), etc.

The six exceptions among the irregular verbs are:

Infinitive	First-person indicative	Present subjunctive
<i>dar</i> to give	<i>doy</i>	<i>dé, des, dé, etc.</i> ⁵
<i>estar</i> to be	<i>estoy</i>	<i>esté, estés, esté, estemos, estéis, estén</i>
<i>haber</i>	<i>he</i>	<i>haya, hayas, haya, etc.</i>
<i>ir</i> to go	<i>voy</i>	<i>vaya, vayas, vaya, etc.</i>
<i>saber</i> to know	<i>sé</i>	<i>sepa, sepas, sepa, etc.</i>
<i>ser</i> to be	<i>soy</i>	<i>sea, seas, sea, etc.</i>

In the case of radical-changing verbs, the usual vowel changes occur, e.g. *cuente, cuentes, cuente, contemos, contéis, cuenten* (from *contar*, see 13.3.14).

Verbs that conjugate like *sentir* 'to feel' show the following irregularity in the present subjunctive:

sienta sientas sienta sintamos sintáis sientan

Two other verbs with slight irregularities in the present subjunctive are *morir* 'to die' and *dormir* 'to sleep'. See 13.3.18 for details.

In Argentina the *vos* forms of the present subjunctive used by careful speakers are the same as the standard *tú* forms. See 16.2.8 for further comments on this topic.

The use of the subjunctive is discussed at length in Chapter 16.

13.1.10 Forms of the past (imperfect) and future subjunctives

There are two sets of imperfect subjunctive endings:

Imperfect subjunctive in -ra:						
-ar verbs:	-ara	-aras	-ara	-áramos	-arais	-aran
-er and -ir verbs:	-iera	-ieras	-iera	-iéramos	-ierais	-ieran

⁵ The accent merely distinguishes the forms from the preposition *de*.

Imperfect subjunctive in -se:

-ar verbs:	-ase	-ases	-ase	-ásemos	-aseis	-asen
-er and -ir verbs:	-iese	-ieses	-iese	-iésemos	-ieseis	-iesen

The endings of the future subjunctive (nowadays obsolete in ordinary language) are identical to those of the *-ra* past subjunctive, except that the last *a* is replaced by *e*:

-ar verbs:	-are	-ares	-are	-áremos	-areis	-aren
-er and -ir verbs:	-iere	-ieres	-iere	-iéremos	-iereis	-ieren

The past (imperfect) and future subjunctive endings are added to the stem of the third-person singular of the preterite indicative.

In the case of regular verbs this stem is found by removing the infinitive ending, e.g. *habl(ar)* > *habl-*: *yo hablará/hablase*, *tú hablaras/hablases*, *él hablará/hablase*, etc.

But in the case of irregular verbs the preterite stem is often irregular, e.g.:

Infinitive	Third-person preterite stem	Past and future subjunctives
<i>sentir</i> 'to feel' and verbs like it	<i>sint(ió)</i>	<i>sintiera/sintiese/sintiere</i> , etc.
<i>pedir</i> 'to request' and verbs like it	<i>pid(ió)</i>	<i>pidiera/pidiese/pidiere</i> , etc.
<i>ser</i> 'to be', <i>ir</i> 'to go'	<i>fu(e)</i>	<i>fuera/fuese/fuere</i> , etc.
<i>producir</i> 'to produce', and all verbs ending in <i>-ducir</i>	<i>produj(o)</i>	<i>produjera/produjese/produjere</i> , etc.
<i>tener</i> 'to have'	<i>tuv(o)</i>	<i>tuviera/tuviese/tuviere</i> , etc.

Morir and *dormir* have the third-person preterite stems *mur(ió)* and *durm(ió)*, so the past subjunctives are *muriera/muriese*, *durmiera/durmiere*, etc.

The forms *-ese*, *-era*, *-ere*, etc. are used with the following verbs:

<i>decir</i>	<i>dijera/dijese</i>
<i>ser</i>	<i>fuera/fuese/fuere</i> , etc.
<i>traer</i>	<i>trajera/trajese/trajere</i> , etc.
all verbs whose infinitive ends in <i>-ducir</i>	<i>condujera, produjese</i> , etc.
all verbs whose infinitive ends in <i>-ñer</i> , <i>-ñir</i> or <i>-llir</i>	<i>bullera, tañese</i> , etc.

Argentine *vos* forms coincide with the standard *tú* forms.

The future subjunctive is virtually obsolete and foreign learners will not need to use it. Its limited uses in modern Spanish are discussed at 16.17.

13.1.11 The imperative

All matters connected with the imperative are discussed in Chapter 17.

13.1.12 Forms of the past participle

The formation of the past participle (*hablado, sido, muerto*, etc.) is discussed at 19.2.1.

13.1.13 The compound tenses

The compound tenses, e.g. the perfect⁶ *he hablado* 'I have spoken', *has visto* 'you've seen' and the pluperfect *habían tenido* 'they'd had', *habrán hecho* 'they'll have made' and the subjunctive counterparts of these two, are always predictable if one can conjugate *haber* (see p.204) and knows the past participle of the verb. For this reason individual compound tenses are not listed in this chapter, but the full compound tense forms of *ver* 'to see' is shown in Table 7, p.205. The use of the compound tenses is discussed at 14.8–14.10.

13.1.14 Forms of the gerund

The formation of the gerund (*hablando, siendo, muriendo*, etc.) is discussed at 20.2.

13.1.15 Forms of the adjectival participle

Some verbs, but by no means all, have an adjectival participle ending in *-ante* in the case of *-ar* verbs and, unpredictably, *-ente* or *-iente* in the case of *-er* and *-ir* verbs, e.g. *preocupante* 'worrying', *hiriente* 'wounding'. The formation and use of this participle is discussed at 19.4.

13.1.16 Continuous forms of verbs

Spanish has a full range of continuous forms, e.g. *estoy hablando* 'I'm talking', *estuve esperando* 'I was waiting'/'I waited for a time', etc. These are all formed from the appropriate tense of *estar* (see p.203) and the invariable gerund. Their use is discussed in Chapter 15.

13.1.17 Forms of the passive

Use of the passive is discussed in Chapter 28, and typical forms are shown on p.198.

13.2 Variants and spelling rules**13.2.1 Colloquial variants**

The verb system is remarkably stable throughout the Spanish-speaking world despite the large number of forms and exceptions. Mistakes caused by attempted regularization of irregular forms, e.g. **cabo* for *quepo* (from *cab*er 'to fit into'), **produció* for *produjo* (from *producir* 'to produce'), **andé* for *anduve* (from *andar* 'to walk') are stigmatized.

However, regularized preterites of verbs in *-ducir*, e.g. **conducí*, **produció* are common in popular Latin-American speech and are sometimes heard in Spain. Foreign learners should avoid them.

⁶ For a clarification of the terminology used to describe past tenses, see 14.1.

Three other popular spoken forms are very common, although all but (a) are stigmatized as uneducated and should be avoided by foreigners:

- (a) use of the infinitive for the *vosotros* form of the imperative: *dar* for *dad* 'give', *callaros* for *callaos* 'shut up!'/ 'be quiet', *iros* for *idos* 'go away', etc. This usage is very widespread in Spain (the *vosotros* forms not being used in Latin America) but it is avoided in writing. For further discussion see 17.2.4;
- (b) addition of *-s* to the second-person preterite singular, e.g. *?distes* for *diste* 'you gave', *?hablastes* for *hablaste* 'you spoke';
- (c) pluralization of forms of *haber* (other than *hay*) when it means 'there is'/'there are', e.g. *?habían muchos* for *había muchos* 'there were many'. This tendency, very common in Catalonia and in Latin America, is discussed further at 30.2.1. note (i);
- (d) a tendency, sporadically heard in local dialects throughout Latin America and in North-American Spanish, to regularize radical changing verbs, e.g. **cuentamos* for *contamos* 'we tell', **detiénete* for *detente* 'stop'. These forms are occasionally seen in dialogue in novels but foreigners should not imitate them.

13.2.2 General spelling rules

Certain spelling changes are applied systematically throughout the verb system. The most common are shown in Table 3, p.200.

- (a) The sound of [g] as in *hago* is spelt *gu* before *e* or *i*: *pagar* > *pague* 'pay', *ruego* > *rogué* 'request', etc.

The sounds [gwe] and [gwi] are written *güe*, *güi*: *averigüe* (from *averiguar* 'to check'/'to ascertain'), *argüi* (from *argüir* 'to argue', i.e. 'argue a point'; *discutir* means 'to have an argument'), etc.

- (b) The sound [k] is written *qu* before *e* and *i*, but *c* in all other cases: *sacar* > *saque* 'take out', etc.

(c) *Z*, pronounced θ (like *th* in 'think') in standard Peninsular Spanish, like *s* in 'sin' in Southern Spain and in Latin America, is spelt *c* before *e*, *i*: *rezar* > *rece* 'pray'. The *z* must be restored before any other vowel: *esparcir* > *esparza* 'scatter'/'strew', *vencer* > *venzo* 'defeat', etc.

Speakers who use Latin-American pronunciation will be unable to predict by sound alone the spelling of such words as *caza* 'hunts' and *casa* 'marry'/'house', or *hace* 'does' and *ase* 'grasps' (from *asir*).

- (d) The sound [χ] (like the *ch* of Scottish 'loch') must be spelt *j* before *a*, *o*: *regir* > *rijo* 'guide'/'control', *coger* > *cojo/coja* 'catch',⁷ etc. The spelling of syllables pronounced [χe] and [χi] must however be learned separately, cf. *ruge* 'roars' (from *rugir*) and *conduje* 'I drove', which rhyme.

(e) The diphthong *ie* is written *ye-* at the beginning of a word. Thus *errar* 'to wander' makes its first-person singular present indicative *yerro* for the predicted **ierro*. See 13.3.20 for the conjugation of *errar*.

- (f) When *-ie* or *ió* follow a consonant that already has an intrinsic *y* sound, i.e. *ñ* or *ll*, the *i* is omitted: *tañer* > *tañó* 'chime' (not **tañió*), *zambullir* >

⁷ *Coger* also has taboo sexual meanings throughout Latin America. In the Southern Cone *agarrar* 'to seize' is preferred for 'to catch'/'to grasp'/'to grab hold of'.

zambulleron 'dive'⁸ (not **zambullieron*), *bullir* > *bullera/bullese* 'boil'/'budge' (not **bulliera*/**bulliese*). Other verbs affected are *escabullirse* 'to vanish'/'to slip away'/'to skive off', *plañir* 'to mourn' (rare), *reñir* 'to scold', *teñir* 'to tint'/'to stain', *ceñir* 'to fasten'/'to attach',⁹ *mullir* 'to make fluffy'/'to fluff up'.

(g) The diphthong *ue* is written *hue* at the beginning of a word. Thus *oler* 'to smell' makes its first-person singular indicative *huelo* for the predicted **uelo*. See 13.3.29 for the conjugation of *oler*.

13.2.3 Spelling and pronunciation of *aislar*, *reunir*, *prohibir* and similar verbs whose stem contains a diphthong

When the last syllable but one of an infinitive contains a falling diphthong (one whose second letter is *i* or *u*), this diphthong may or may not be broken into two syllables when it is stressed:

<i>prohibir</i> , [proyβír] (two syllables)	<i>prohíbe</i> [proíβe] (three syllables)
<i>reunir</i> , [rrewnír] (two syllables)	<i>reúnes</i> [rreúnes] (three syllables)
but	
<i>causar</i> [kawsár] (two syllables)	<i>causas</i> [káwsas] (two syllables)

Since 1959 the stressed vowel in such broken diphthongs has been written with an accent. In the Academy's view the fact that *-h-* appears between the two vowels makes no difference. This ruling affects the following forms of the verb:

Present indicative

aislar to isolate: *aíslo*, *aísla*, *aíslo*, *aislamos*, *aisláis*, *aíslan*

reunir to bring together¹⁰: *reúne*, *reúnes*, *reúne*, *reunimos*, *reunís*, *reúnen*

prohibir to prohibit: *prohíbo*, *prohíbes*, *prohíbe*, *prohibimos*, *prohibís*, *prohiben*

Present subjunctive

aísle, *aísles*, *aísle*, *aislemos*, *aisléis*, *aíslen*

reúna, *reúnas*, *reúna*, *reunamos*, *reunáis*, *reúnan*

prohíba, *prohíbas*, *prohíba*, *prohibamos*, *prohibáis*, *prohiban*

Singular imperative

aíslo

reúne

prohíbe

Among verbs affected are:

<i>ahijar</i>	<i>amohinar</i>	<i>desahitarse</i>	<i>maullar</i>
<i>ahilar</i>	<i>arcaizar</i>	<i>desenraizar</i>	<i>prohijar</i>
<i>ahincar</i>	<i>auillar</i>	<i>enraizar</i>	<i>rehilar</i>
<i>ahitar</i>	<i>aunar</i>	<i>europaizar</i>	<i>rehusar</i>
<i>ahumar</i>	<i>aupar</i>	<i>hebraizar</i>	<i>sahumar</i>
<i>airar</i>	<i>cohibir</i>	<i>judaizar</i>	<i>sobrehilar</i>

In other verbs the diphthong is not broken, i.e. when the diphthong is stressed the accent falls on its first vowel and no written accent appears, e.g.

⁸ Usually *tirarse al agua* 'to dive into the water'.

⁹ cf. *Cíñete más a la versión original* 'Stick closer to the original version'.

¹⁰ *Reunirse* 'to meet' (i.e. 'hold a meeting').

arraigo, encausa, etc. Similar are *amainar, causar, desahuciar* (variable, usually the diphthong is retained), *desenvainar, embaucar, embaular* (variable – the verb is hardly ever used), *envainar, reinar, peinar, recauchar*, etc.

The new spelling is in general use in printed texts in Spain, but some thirty years later most people omit the accent in handwriting and many Latin-American publishers use the old forms without the accent.

13.2.4 Verbs whose infinitive ends in -iar

These are of two types. The majority conjugate like *cambiar* ‘to change’: the *-ia* survives as a diphthong throughout and is always pronounced [ya]:

Infinitive <i>cambiar</i>		Gerund <i>canbiando</i>		
Past participle <i>canbiado</i>		Imperative <i>cambia cambiad</i>		
INDICATIVE				
Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>cambio</i>	<i>canbiaba</i>	<i>canbié</i>	<i>canbiaré</i>	<i>canbiaría</i>
<i>cambias</i>	<i>canbiabas</i>	<i>canbiaste</i>	<i>canbiarás</i>	<i>canbiarías</i>
<i>cambia</i>	<i>canbiaba</i>	<i>canbió</i>	<i>canbiará</i>	<i>canbiaría</i>
<i>cambiamos</i>	<i>canbiábamos</i>	<i>canbiamos</i>	<i>canbiaremos</i>	<i>canbiaríamos</i>
<i>canbiáis</i>	<i>canbiabais</i>	<i>canbiasteis</i>	<i>canbiaréis</i>	<i>canbiaríais</i>
<i>cambian</i>	<i>canbiaban</i>	<i>canbiaron</i>	<i>canbiarán</i>	<i>canbiarían</i>
SUBJUNCTIVE				
Present	Imperfect	Future		
<i>cambie</i>	<i>canbiara/canbiase</i>	<i>canbiare</i>		
<i>cambies</i>	<i>canbiaras/canbiases</i>	etc.		
<i>cambie</i>	<i>canbiara/canbiase</i>			
<i>cambiamos</i>	<i>canbiáramos/canbiásemos</i>			
<i>canbiéis</i>	<i>canbiarais/canbiaseis</i>			
<i>cambien</i>	<i>canbiaran/canbiasen</i>			

But about fifty verbs conjugate like *liar* ‘to tie in a bundle’, i.e. the *i* of the diphthong may be stressed:

Infinitive <i>liar</i>		Gerund <i>liando</i>		
Past participle <i>liado</i>		Imperative <i>lía liad</i>		
INDICATIVE				
Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>lío</i>	<i>liaba</i>	<i>lié</i>	<i>liaré</i>	<i>liaría</i>
<i>lías</i>	<i>liabas</i>	<i>liaste</i>	<i>liarás</i>	<i>liarías</i>
<i>lía</i>	<i>liaba</i>	<i>lió</i>	<i>liará</i>	<i>liaría</i>
<i>liamos</i>	<i>liábamos</i>	<i>liamos</i>	<i>liaremos</i>	<i>liaríamos</i>
<i>liáis</i>	<i>liabais</i>	<i>liasteis</i>	<i>liaréis</i>	<i>liaríais</i>
<i>lian</i>	<i>liaban</i>	<i>liaron</i>	<i>liarán</i>	<i>liarían</i>
SUBJUNCTIVE				
Present	Imperfect	Future		
<i>líe</i>	<i>liara/liase</i>	<i>liare</i>		
<i>líes</i>	<i>liaras/liases</i>	etc.		
<i>líe</i>	<i>liara/liase</i>			
<i>liemos</i>	<i>liáramos/liásemos</i>			
<i>liéis</i>	<i>liarais/liaseis</i>			
<i>lien</i>	<i>liaran/liasen</i>			

The following list shows common verbs which conjugate like *liar*, and verbs about which the authorities are in disagreement. Verbs ending in *-iar* that do not appear below can be assumed to conjugate like *cambiar* 'to change':

<i>agriar</i> (disputed, usually like <i>cambiar</i>)	<i>expiar</i>
<i>aliar</i>	<i>extasiarse</i> (disputed, usually like <i>liar</i>)
<i>amnistiar</i>	<i>extraviar</i>
<i>ampliar</i>	<i>fiar</i>
<i>ansiar</i>	<i>filiar</i> (but optionally like <i>cambiar</i>)
<i>arriar</i>	<i>fotografiar</i>
<i>ataviar</i>	<i>gloriar(se)</i>
<i>autografiar</i>	<i>guiar</i>
<i>auxiliar</i> (disputed, usually like <i>cambiar</i>)	<i>hastiar</i>
<i>averiar</i>	<i>historiar</i> (disputed, usually like <i>cambiar</i>)
<i>aviar</i>	<i>inventariar</i>
<i>biografiar</i>	<i>litografiar</i>
<i>conciliar</i> (disputed, usually like <i>cambiar</i>)	<i>malcriar</i>
<i>contrariar</i>	<i>mecanografiar</i>
<i>criar</i>	<i>paliar</i> (but usually like <i>cambiar</i>)
<i>dactilografiar</i>	<i>piar</i>
<i>desafiar</i>	<i>porfiar</i>
<i>descarriar</i>	<i>radiografiar</i>
<i>descrriarse</i>	<i>recriar</i>
<i>desliar</i>	<i>resfriar</i>
<i>desvariar</i>	<i>rociar</i>
<i>desviar</i>	<i>telegrafiar</i>
<i>enfriar</i>	<i>vaciar</i>
<i>enviar</i>	<i>vanagloriarse</i> (almost always like <i>cambiar</i>)
<i>escalofriar</i>	<i>variar</i>
<i>espiar</i>	<i>vidriar</i> (Academy recommends conj. like <i>cambiar</i>)
<i>expatriar</i> (disputed; also like <i>cambiar</i>)	

13.2.5 Verbs whose infinitive ends in *-uar*

Nearly all conjugate like *actuar* 'to act', i.e. the *u* may be stressed. But those that end in *-guar* and *-cuar* conjugate like *averiguar* 'to check'/'to ascertain': the *ua* forms an inseparable diphthong (pronounced [wa]).

Infinitive *actuar*

Gerund *actuando*

Past participle *actuado*

Imperative *actúa actuad*

INDICATIVE

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>actúo</i>	<i>actuaba</i>	<i>actué</i>	<i>actuaré</i>	<i>actuaría</i>
<i>actúas</i>	<i>actuabas</i>	<i>actuaste</i>	<i>actuarás</i>	<i>actuarías</i>
<i>actúa</i>	<i>actuaba</i>	<i>actuó</i>	<i>actuará</i>	<i>actuaría</i>
<i>actuamos</i>	<i>actuábamos</i>	<i>actuamos</i>	<i>actuiremos</i>	<i>actuaríamos</i>
<i>actuáis</i>	<i>actuabais</i>	<i>actuasteis</i>	<i>actuaréis</i>	<i>actuaríais</i>
<i>actúan</i>	<i>actuaban</i>	<i>actuaron</i>	<i>actuarán</i>	<i>actuarían</i>

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present	Imperfect	Future
<i>actúe</i>	<i>actuara/actuase</i>	<i>actuire</i>
<i>actúes</i>	<i>actuaras/actuases</i>	etc.
<i>actúe</i>	<i>actuara/actuase</i>	
<i>actuemos</i>	<i>actuáramos/actuásemos</i>	
<i>actuéis</i>	<i>actuarais/actuaseis</i>	
<i>actúen</i>	<i>actuaran/actuasen</i>	

Verbs conjugated like *actuar* are:

<i>acentuar</i>	<i>habituár</i>
<i>atenuar</i>	<i>individuár</i>
<i>conceptuar</i>	<i>infatuár</i>
<i>continuar</i>	<i>insinuár</i>
<i>desvirtuar</i>	<i>perpetuar</i>
<i>efectuar</i>	<i>preceptuar</i>
<i>evaluar</i>	<i>puntuár</i>
<i>exceptuar</i>	<i>redituar</i>
<i>extenuar</i>	<i>situár</i>
<i>fluctuar</i>	<i>usufractuár</i>
<i>graduar</i>	<i>valuar</i>

Infinitive *averiguar*
Past participle *averiguado*

Gerund *averiguando*
Imperative *averigua averiguad*

INDICATIVE

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>averiguo</i>	<i>averiguaba</i>	<i>averigüé</i>	<i>averiguaré</i>	<i>averiguaría</i>
<i>averiguas</i>	<i>averiguabas</i>	<i>averiguaste</i>	<i>averiguarás</i>	<i>averiguarías</i>
<i>averigua</i>	<i>averiguaba</i>	<i>averiguó</i>	<i>averiguará</i>	<i>averiguaría</i>
<i>averiguamos</i>	<i>averiguábamos</i>	<i>averiguamos</i>	<i>averiguaremos</i>	<i>averiguaríamos</i>
<i>averiguáis</i>	<i>averiguabais</i>	<i>averiguasteis</i>	<i>averiguaréis</i>	<i>averiguaríais</i>
<i>averiguan</i>	<i>averiguaban</i>	<i>averiguaron</i>	<i>averiguarán</i>	<i>averiguarían</i>

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present	Imperfect	Future
<i>averigüe</i>	<i>averiguaral/averiguase</i>	<i>averiguare</i>
<i>averigües</i>	<i>averiguaras/averiguases</i>	etc.
<i>averigüe</i>	<i>averiguaral/averiguase</i>	
<i>averigüemos</i>	<i>averiguáramos/averiguásemos</i>	
<i>averigüéis</i>	<i>averiguarais/averiguaseis</i>	
<i>averigüen</i>	<i>averiguaran/averiguasen</i>	

Note

Few verbs end in *-cuar*, *evacuar* being the most common. It should be conjugated like *averiguar* – but without the dieresis – although conjugation like *actuar* is a common mistake in Spain and is apparently accepted usage in some Latin-American countries.

13.2.6 Verbs whose infinitive ends in -ear

These are all regular. The penultimate *e* is never written with an accent, cf. *pasear* ‘to go for a walk’:

Present indicative

<i>paseo</i>	<i>paseamos</i>
<i>paseas</i>	<i>paseáis</i>
<i>pasea</i>	<i>pasean</i>

Present subjunctive

<i>pasee</i>	<i>paseemos</i>
<i>pasees</i>	<i>paseéis</i>
<i>pasee</i>	<i>paseen</i>

13.2.7 Verbs whose infinitive ends in -cer

If the infinitive ends in *-cer* the spelling changes shown on p.200 are applied in the case of a few verbs (*c > z* before *a, o*). These affect the first-person singular of the present indicative and all of the present subjunctive.

However, the only verbs ending in *-cer* that are conjugated in this way are:

(a) those in which the *c/z* occurs after a consonant.

<i>convencer</i>	to convince
<i>ejercer</i>	to practise ¹¹ (a profession)
<i>(re)torcer</i>	to twist (radical changing; see 13.3.12)
<i>vencer</i>	to defeat

(b) the following three exceptional verbs.

<i>(re)cocer</i>	to cook (radical changing; see 13.3.12)
<i>escocerse</i>	to sting/smart (conj. like <i>cocer</i> ; <i>picar</i> 'to sting' is more usual)
<i>mecer</i>	to rock/swing; <i>mecerse</i> 'to sway'

The rest, which are numerous, conjugate like *parecer*, i.e. *-zc-* replaces *-c-* before *-o* or *-a*. See 13.3.10 for examples.

13.2.8 Verbs whose infinitive ends in -eer

All are conjugated like *poseer* 'to possess', shown at 13.3.35.

13.2.9 Verbs whose infinitive ends in -cir

The spelling changes shown on p.200 must be applied if the infinitive ends in *-cir*: *c > z* before *a, o*. However the only totally regular verbs ending in *-cir* are *esparcir* 'to scatter/strew', *zurcir* 'to darn/sew together' and *fruncir* 'to pucker/wrinkle' (the eyebrows). All the others should be sought in the list at the end of this Chapter.

13.2.10 Verbs whose infinitive ends in -uir

All are conjugated like *construir* 'to build', shown at 13.3.13.

13.3 Irregular verbs**13.3.1 General**

Irregular verbs and model radical changing verbs are listed in alphabetical order, though the very frequent verbs *ser*, *estar* and *haber* are shown in Tables 4, 5 and 6, pp.202-204. Connoisseurs will miss such oddities as the archaic *abarse*, attested only in the imperative singular *ábate* 'get thee hence!', or *usucapir* 'to acquire property rights through customary use', used in legal jargon and only in the infinitive. These and similar verbs unknown in everyday language should be sought in the Academy's publications or in other specialized manuals.

¹¹ US spelling 'to practice'.

13.3.2 Abolir 'to abolish'

A defective verb. Only those forms are used in which the verb ending begins with *-i*.

Infinitive *abolir*

Past participle *abolido*

Gerund *aboliendo*

Imperative *abolid*. (**abole* not used)

INDICATIVE

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
not used	<i>abolía</i>	<i>abolí</i>	<i>aboliré</i>	<i>aboliría</i>
not used	etc.	etc.	etc.	etc.
not used				
<i>abolimos</i>				
<i>abolís</i>				
not used				

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present	Imperfect	Future
no forms	<i>aboliera/aboliese</i>	<i>aboliere</i>
in use	etc.	etc.

Unused forms must be replaced, e.g. **sin que se abola* by *sin que sea abolido* 'without it being abolished'.

There are a few other verbs that share the same peculiarity, but none besides *abolir* and *agredir* is much used in the modern language:

aguerrir 'to inure/harden' (only past participle in use)

agredir see 13.3.4

arrecirse (Lat. Am.) 'to be frozen stiff'

aterirse 'to be numb with cold' (only infinitive and participle used)

blandir 'to brandish'

despavorir 'to be terrified' (only past participle in use)

empedernir 'to harden/petrify' (participle only in use)

garantir 'to guarantee' (replaced by *garantizar* but still used in Peru and the Southern Cone, where it is often conjugated normally)

13.3.3 Adquirir 'to acquire'

The infinitive of this verb was once *adquerir*, which explains the appearance of *-ie-* when the stem vowel is stressed:

Infinitive *adquirir*

Past participle *adquirido*

Gerund *adquiriendo*

Imperative *adquiere* *adquirid*

INDICATIVE

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>adquiero</i>	<i>adquiría</i>	<i>adquirí</i>	<i>adquiriré</i>	<i>adquiriría</i>
<i>adquieres</i>	etc.	etc.	etc.	etc.
<i>adquiere</i>				
<i>adquirimos</i>				
<i>adquirís</i>				
<i>adquieren</i>				

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present

adquiera
adquieras
adquiera
adquiramos
adquiráis
adquieran

Imperfect

adquiriera/adquiriese
etc.

Future

adquiriere
etc.

13.3.4 Agredir ‘to assault’/‘attack’

This verb is classified by some as defective (like *abolir*), by others as a normal *-ir* verb, the former usage being the more conservative.

13.3.5 Andar ‘to walk’/‘go about’

This verb is conjugated like a regular *-ar* verb throughout, except for the preterite indicative and, consequently, the past and future subjunctive:

Preterite indicative

anduve
anduviste
anduvo
anduvimos
anduvisteis
anduvieron

Imperfect subjunctive

anduviera/anduviese
etc.

Future subjunctive

anduviere
etc.

13.3.6 Asir ‘to grasp’/‘seize’

Usually replaced in everyday language by *agarrarse*. In practice, forms that contain a *g* are avoided, although other forms are occasionally heard, e.g. *Me así a una rama para no caerme* ‘I clutched hold of a branch so as not to fall’.

Infinitive *asir*

Past participle *asido*

Gerund *asiendo*

Imperative *ase, asid*

INDICATIVE

Present

(asgo)
ases
ase
asimos
asís
asen

Imperfect

asía
etc.

Preterite

así
etc.

Future

asiré
etc.

Conditional

asiría
etc.

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present

(asga)
(asgas)
(asga)
(asgamos)
(asgáis)
(asgan)

Imperfect

asieralasiere
etc.

Future

asiere
etc.

13.3.7 Balbucir ‘to stammer’

This verb is often replaced by the regular *balbucear*. *Balbucir* has the peculiarity that, although it is conjugated regularly, no form containing a *z* is used, so **balbuzo* and the present subjunctive are not found.

13.3.8 Caber 'to fit in'

Infinitive *caber*

Past participle *cabido*

Gerund *cabiendo*

Imperative *cabe cabed*

INDICATIVE

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>quepo</i>	<i>cabía</i>	<i>cupe</i>	<i>cabré</i>	<i>cabría</i>
<i>cabes</i>	etc.	<i>cupiste</i>	etc.	etc.
<i>cabe</i>		<i>cupo</i>		
<i>cabemos</i>		<i>cupimos</i>		
<i>cabéis</i>		<i>cupisteis</i>		
<i>caben</i>		<i>cupieron</i>		

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present	Imperfect	Future
<i>quepa</i>	<i>cupiera/cupiese</i>	<i>cupiere</i>
<i>quepas</i>	<i>cupieras/cupieses</i>	etc.
<i>quepa</i>	<i>cupiera/cupiese</i>	
<i>quepamos</i>	<i>cupiéramos/cupiésemos</i>	
<i>quepáis</i>	<i>cupierais/cupieseis</i>	
<i>quepan</i>	<i>cupieran/cupiesen</i>	

Usage: *¿Quepo yo?* 'Is there room for me?', *No cabe* 'It won't fit', *No cabíamos* 'There wasn't room for us'.

13.3.9 Caer 'to fall'

Infinitive *caer*

Past participle *caído*

Gerund *cayendo*

Imperative *cae caed*

INDICATIVE

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>caigo</i>	<i>caía</i>	<i>caí</i>	<i>caeré</i>	<i>caería</i>
<i>caes</i>	<i>caías</i>	<i>caíste</i>	etc.	etc.
<i>cae</i>	<i>caía</i>	<i>cayó</i>		
<i>caemos</i>	<i>caíamos</i>	<i>caímos</i>		
<i>caéis</i>	<i>caíais</i>	<i>caísteis</i>		
<i>caen</i>	<i>caían</i>	<i>cayeron</i>		

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present	Imperfect	Future
<i>caiga</i>	<i>cayera/cayese</i>	<i>cayere</i>
<i>caigas</i>	<i>cayeras/cayeses</i>	etc.
<i>caiga</i>	<i>cayera/cayese</i>	
<i>caigamos</i>	<i>cayéramos/cayésemos</i>	
<i>caigáis</i>	<i>cayerais/cayeseis</i>	
<i>caigan</i>	<i>cayeran/cayesen</i>	

13.3.10 Verbs whose infinitive ends in -cer

All verbs ending in *-cer* conjugate as shown hereafter, except the regular verbs *ejercer*, *(con)vencer* and *mecer*, and the radical changing verbs *escocer*, *(re)cocer* and *(re)torcer* (for which see 13.3.12).

Nacer 'to be born' is typical of this class of verb: *c > zc* before *a* or *o*:

Infinitive *nacer*

Past participle *nacido*

Gerund *naciendo*

Imperative *nace naced*

INDICATIVE

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>nazco</i>	<i>nacía</i>	<i>nací</i>	<i>naceré</i>	<i>nacería</i>
<i>naces</i>	<i>nacías</i>	<i>naciste</i>	etc.	etc.
<i>nace</i>	<i>nacía</i>	<i>nació</i>		
<i>nacemos</i>	<i>nacíamos</i>	<i>nacimos</i>		
<i>nacéis</i>	<i>nacíais</i>	<i>nacisteis</i>		
<i>nacen</i>	<i>nacían</i>	<i>nacieron</i>		

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present	Imperfect	Future
<i>nazca</i>	<i>naciera/naciese</i>	<i>naciere</i>
<i>nazcas</i>	<i>nacieras/nacieses</i>	etc.
<i>nazca</i>	<i>naciera/naciese</i>	
<i>nazcamos</i>	<i>naciéramos/naciésemos</i>	
<i>nazcáis</i>	<i>nacierais/nacieseis</i>	
<i>nazcan</i>	<i>nacieran/naciesen</i>	

13.3.11 **Cerrar 'to shut/close'**

A common type of radical changing verb. The endings are those of regular *-ar* verbs, but the *e* of the stem changes to *ie* when stressed.

Infinitive <i>cerrar</i>	Gerund <i>cerrando</i>
Past participle <i>cerrado</i>	Imperative <i>cierra cerrad</i>

INDICATIVE

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>cierro</i>	<i>cerraba</i>	<i>cerré</i>	<i>cerraré</i>	<i>cerraría</i>
<i>cierras</i>	etc.	etc.	etc.	etc.
<i>cierra</i>				
<i>cerramos</i>				
<i>cerráis</i>				
<i>cierran</i>				

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present	Imperfect	Future
<i>cierre</i>	<i>cerrara/cerrase</i>	<i>cerrare</i>
<i>cierres</i>	etc.	etc.
<i>cierre</i>		
<i>cerremos</i>		
<i>cerréis</i>		
<i>cierren</i>		

13.3.12 **Cocer 'to boil'**

This, and *escocer* 'to sting', *torcer* 'to twist' and *retorcer* 'to wring/twist', conjugate exactly like *mover* except for the predictable spelling change *c > z* before *a, o*:

Infinitive <i>cocer</i>	Gerund <i>cociendo</i>
Past participle <i>cocido</i>	Imperative <i>cuece coced</i>

INDICATIVE

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>cuezo</i>	<i>cocía</i>	<i>cocí</i>	<i>coceré</i>	<i>cocería</i>
<i>cueces</i>	etc.	etc.	etc.	etc.
<i>cuece</i>				
<i>cocemos</i>				
<i>cocéis</i>				
<i>cuecen</i>				

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present <i>cueza</i> <i>cuezas</i> <i>cueza</i> <i>cozamos</i> <i>cozáis</i> <i>cuezan</i>	Imperfect <i>cociera/cociese</i> etc.	Future <i>cociere</i> etc.
---	--	---

13.3.13 Construir 'to build'

Verbs ending in *-uir* are quite common. An unstressed *i* between vowels is spelt *y*, e.g. *construyó* for the expected **construíó*, and an unexpected *y* is inserted in a number of forms, e.g. *construyes* for the predicted **construes*.

Infinitive <i>construir</i>	Gerund <i>construyendo</i>
Past Participle <i>construido</i> ¹²	Imperative <i>construye construid</i>

INDICATIVE

Present <i>construyo</i> <i>construyes</i> <i>construye</i> <i>construimos</i> <i>construís</i> <i>construyen</i>	Imperfect <i>construía</i> etc.	Preterite <i>construí</i> <i>construiste</i> <i>construyó</i> <i>construimos</i> <i>construisteis</i> <i>construyeron</i>	Future <i>construiré</i> etc.	Conditional <i>construiría</i> etc.
--	--	--	--	--

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present <i>construya</i> <i>construyas</i> <i>construya</i> <i>construyamos</i> <i>construyáis</i> <i>construyan</i>	Imperfect <i>construyera/construyese</i> etc.	Future <i>construyere</i> etc.
---	--	---

Note

Argüir 'to argue (a point)' is spelt with a dieresis whenever the *u* is followed by *i*. This preserves the pronunciation [gwi]: *arguyo*, *argüimos*, *argüí*, *arguya*, etc.

13.3.14 Contar 'to count'/'tell a story'

A common type of radical changing verb. The endings are regular but the *o* of the stem changes to *ue* when stressed:

Infinitive <i>contar</i>	Gerund <i>contando</i>
Past Participle <i>contado</i>	Imperative <i>cuenta contad</i>

INDICATIVE

Present <i>cuento</i> <i>cuentas</i> <i>cuenta</i> <i>contamos</i> <i>contáis</i> <i>cuentan</i>	Imperfect <i>contaba</i> etc.	Preterite <i>conté</i> etc.	Future <i>contaré</i> etc.	Conditional <i>contaría</i> etc.
---	--	--	---	---

¹² No written accent because *u* and *i* are both 'weak' vowels. Contrast *leído*, *creído*, etc. See 39.2.3b for explanation.

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present

cuente
cuentes
cuente
contemos
contéis
cuenten

Imperfect

contara/contase
 etc.

Future

contare
 etc.

13.3.15 Dar 'to give'**Infinitive** *dar*

Past Participle *dado*

Gerund *dando*

Imperative *da dad*

INDICATIVE

Present

doy
das
da
damos
dais
dan

Imperfect

daba
dabas
daba
dábamos
dabais
daban

Preterite

di
diste
dio (no accent!)
dimos
disteis
dieron

Future

daré
 etc.

Conditional

daría
 etc.

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present

*dé*¹³
des
*dé*¹³
demos
deis
den

Imperfect

diera/diese
dieras/dieses
diera/diese
dieramos/diésemos
dierais/dieseis
dieran/diesen

Future

diere
 etc.

13.3.16 Decir 'to say'**Infinitive** *decir*

Past Participle *dicho*

Gerund *diciendo*

Imperative *di decid*

INDICATIVE

Present

digo
dices
dice
decimos
decís
dicen

Imperfect

decía
 etc.

Preterite

dije
dijiste
dijo
dijimos
dijisteis
dijeron

Future

diré
 etc.

Conditional

diría
 etc.

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present

diga
digas
diga
digamos
digáis
digán

Imperfect

dijera/dijese
dijeras/dijeses
dijera/dijese
dijéramos/dijésemos
dijerais/dijeseis
dijeran/ijesen

Future

dijere
 etc.

¹³ The accent distinguishes it from *de* 'of'.

13.3.17 Discernir ‘to discern’/‘to distinguish’

This shows the common radical changing modification $e > ie$, but verbs like *discernir* are very unusual in the *-ir* conjugation: only *cernir* ‘to hover’/‘to loom’, *concernir* (third person only) ‘to concern’ and *hendir* (Lat. Am.; Spain *hender*) ‘to cleave’ conjugate like it:

Infinitive *discernir***Past Participle** *discernido***Gerund** *discerniendo***Imperative** *discierne discernid***INDICATIVE****Present***discierno
disciernes
discierne
discernimos
discernís
disciernen***Imperfect***discernía
etc.***Preterite***discerní
discerniste
discernió¹⁴
discernimos
discernisteis
discernieron¹⁴***Future***discerniré
etc.***Conditional***discerniría
etc.***SUBJUNCTIVE****Present***discierna
disciernas
discierna
discernamos
discernáis
disciernan***Imperfect***disciernera/discierniese
etc.***Future***discierniere
etc.***13.3.18 Dormir ‘to sleep’, morir ‘to die’**

Dormir and *morir* are the only verbs of this kind.

Apart from the common change $o > ue$, the third-person preterite stem vowel is *u*. The *u* also appears in the first and second plural of the present subjunctive and in the gerund.

Infinitive *dormir***Past Participle** *dormido (muerto)***Gerund** *durmiendo***Imperative** *duerme dormid***INDICATIVE****Present***duermo
duermes
duerme
dormimos
dormís
duermen***Imperfect***dormía
etc.***Preterite***dormí
dormiste
durmió
dormimos
dormisteis
durmieron***Future***dormiré
etc.***Conditional***dormiría
etc.***SUBJUNCTIVE****Present***duerma
duermas
duerma
durmamos
durmáis
duerman***Imperfect***durmiera/durmiese
durmieras/durmieses
durmiera/durmiese
durmiéramos/durmiésemos
durmierais/durmieseis
durmieran/durmiesen***Future***durmiere
etc.*

¹⁴ Not the expected **discirnió*, **discirnieron*.

13.3.19 Erguir(se) ‘to rear up’/‘to sit up straight’

This verb has alternative forms in some of its tenses, the forms with *y-* being more common.

Infinitive *erguir*

Past Participle *erguido*

Gerund *irguiendo*

Imperative *yerguelirgue erguid*

INDICATIVE

Present

yergo/irgo

yergues/irgues

yerguelirgue

erguimos

erguís

yerguen/irguen

Imperfect

erguía

etc.

Preterite

erguí

erguiste

irguió

erguimos

erguisteis

irguieron

Future

erguiré

etc.

Conditional

erguiría

etc.

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present

yergal/irga

yergas/irgas

yergal/irga

yergamos/irgamos

yergáis/irgáis

yergan/irgan

Imperfect

irguiera/irguiese

etc.

Future

irguiere

etc.

Usage: *No te agaches – ponte erguido* ‘Stop slouching – sit up straight’, *Se irguió como una serpiente* ‘It rose up like a snake’, *El perro irguió las orejas* ‘The dog pricked up its ears’, etc.

13.3.20 Errar ‘to wander’/‘to err’

This verb conjugates like *cerrar*, i.e. *e > ie* when stressed, but the *ie* is written *ye*. In the Southern Cone and Colombia and in some other parts of Latin America it is often regular, i.e. *erro, erras, erra*, etc.

Infinitive *errar*

Past Participle *errado*

Gerund *errando*

Imperative *yerra errad*

INDICATIVE

Present

yerro

yerras

yerra

erramos

erráis

yerran

Imperfect

erraba

etc.

Preterite

erré

etc.

Future

erraré

etc.

Conditional

erraría

etc.

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present

yerre

yerres

yerre

erremos

erréis

yerren

Imperfect

errara/errase

etc.

Future

errare

etc.

13.3.21 Estar ‘to be’ haber ‘to have’ (auxiliary verb)

See Table 5, p.203 and Table 6, p.204.

13.3.22 *Hacer* 'to do'/'to make'

There are several compounds, e.g. *deshacer* 'to undo', *contrahacer* 'to counterfeit'

Infinitive *hacer*

Gerund *haciendo*

Past Participle *hecho*

Imperative *haz* *haced*

INDICATIVE

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>hago</i>	<i>hacía</i>	<i>hice</i>	<i>haré</i>	<i>haría</i>
<i>haces</i>	etc.	<i>hiciste</i>	etc.	etc.
<i>hace</i>		<i>hizo</i>		
<i>hacemos</i>		<i>hicimos</i>		
<i>hacéis</i>		<i>hicisteis</i>		
<i>hacen</i>		<i>hicieron</i>		

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present	Imperfect	Future
<i>haga</i>	<i>hiciera/hiciese</i>	<i>hiciera</i>
<i>hagas</i>	<i>hicieras/hicieses</i>	etc.
<i>haga</i>	<i>hiciera/hiciese</i>	
<i>hagamos</i>	<i>hiciéramos/hiciésemos</i>	
<i>hagáis</i>	<i>hicierais/hicieseis</i>	
<i>hagan</i>	<i>hicieran/hiciesen</i>	

13.3.23 *Ir* 'to go'

Infinitive *ir*

Gerund *yendo*

Past Participle *ido*

Imperative *ve* *id* (see note)

INDICATIVE

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>voy</i>	<i>iba</i>	<i>fuí</i> (no accent!)	<i>iré</i>	<i>iría</i>
<i>vas</i>	<i>ibas</i>	<i>fuiste</i>	etc.	etc.
<i>va</i>	<i>iba</i>	<i>fué</i> (no accent!)		
<i>vamos</i>	<i>íbamos</i>	<i>fuimos</i>		
<i>vais</i>	<i>ibais</i>	<i>fuisteis</i>		
<i>van</i>	<i>iban</i>	<i>fueron</i>		

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present	Imperfect	Future
<i>vaya</i>	<i>fuera/fuese</i>	<i>fuere</i>
<i>vayas</i>	<i>fuera/fuese</i>	etc.
<i>vaya</i>	<i>fuera/fuese</i>	
<i>vayamos</i>	<i>fuéramos/fuésemos</i>	
<i>vayáis</i>	<i>fuerais/fueseis</i>	
<i>vayan</i>	<i>fueran/fuesen</i>	

Note

The *vosotros* imperative of *irse* is irregularly *idos* (for the predicted **fos*). See 17.2.4 for further discussion of this form.

13.3.24 Jugar ‘to play’¹⁵

This verb is unique in that *u* > *ue* when stressed. Note also *g* > *gu* before *e*.

Infinitive *jugar***Gerund** *jugando***Past Participle** *jugado***Imperative** *juega jugad***INDICATIVE****Present***juego
juegas
juega
jugamos
jugáis
juegan***Imperfect***jugaba
etc.***Preterite***jugué
etc.***Future***jugaré
etc.***Conditional***jugaría
etc.***SUBJUNCTIVE****Present***juegue
juegues
juegue
juguemos
juguéis
jueguen***Imperfect***jugara/jugase
etc.***Future***jugare
etc.***13.3.25 Lucir ‘to show off’ (transitive)****Infinitive** *lucir***Gerund** *luciendo***Past Participle** *lucido***Imperative** *luce lucid***INDICATIVE****Present***luzco
luces
luce
lucimos
lucís
lucen***Imperfect***lucía
etc.***Preterite***lucí
etc.***Future***luciré
etc.***Conditional***luciría
etc.***SUBJUNCTIVE****Present***luzca
luzcas
luzca
luzcamos
luzcáis
luzcan***Imperfect***luciera/luciese
etc.***Future***luciere
etc.***Note**

Verbs ending in *-ducir* are conjugated like *producir* shown at 13.3.36.

13.3.26 Maldecir ‘to curse’, bendecir ‘to bless’

Conjugated like *decir* in some tenses, and regularly in others. Forms that differ from *decir* are shown in bold type:

Infinitive *maldecir***Gerund** *maldiciendo***Past Participle** *maldecido***Imperative** *maldice maldecid*

¹⁵ i.e. ‘play a game’. *Tocar* = ‘to play an instrument’

INDICATIVE

Present <i>maldigo</i> <i>maldices</i> <i>maldice</i> <i>maldecimos</i> <i>maldecís</i> <i>maldicen</i>	Imperfect <i>maldecía</i> etc.	Preterite <i>maldije</i> <i>maldijiste</i> <i>maldijo</i> <i>maldijimos</i> <i>maldijisteis</i> <i>maldijeron</i>	Future <i>maldeciré</i> <i>maldecirás</i> <i>maldecirá</i> <i>maldeciremos</i> <i>maldeciréis</i> <i>maldecirán</i>	Conditional <i>maldeciría</i> <i>maldecirías</i> <i>maldeciría</i> <i>maldeciríamos</i> <i>maldeciríais</i> <i>maldecirían</i>
--	---	--	--	---

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present <i>maldiga</i> <i>maldigas</i> <i>maldiga</i> <i>maldigamos</i> <i>maldigáis</i> <i>maldigan</i>	Imperfect <i>maldijera/maldijese</i> <i>maldijeras/maldijeses</i> <i>maldijera/maldijese</i> <i>maldijéramos/maldijésemos</i> <i>maldijerais/maldijeseis</i> <i>maldijeran/maldijesen</i>	Future <i>maldijere</i> etc.
---	--	---

13.3.27 **Mover 'to move'**

A common type of radical changing verb. The endings are regular but the *o* of the stem changes to *ue* when stressed.

Infinitive *mover*

Past Participle *movido*

Gerund *moviendo*

Imperative *mueve, moved*

INDICATIVE

Present <i>muevo</i> <i>mueves</i> <i>mueve</i> <i>movemos</i> <i>movéis</i> <i>mueven</i>	Imperfect <i>movía</i> etc.	Preterite <i>moví</i> etc.	Future <i>moveré</i> etc.	Conditional <i>movería</i> etc.
---	--	---	--	--

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present <i>mueva</i> <i>muevas</i> <i>mueva</i> <i>movamos</i> <i>mováis</i> <i>muevan</i>	Imperfect <i>moviera/moviese</i> etc.	Future <i>moviere</i> etc.
---	--	---

13.3.28 **Oír 'to hear' (also the rare desoír 'to disregard')**

Infinitive *oír*

Past Participle *oído*

Gerund *oyendo*

Imperative *oye oíd*

INDICATIVE

Present <i>oigo</i> <i>oyes</i> <i>oye</i> <i>oímos</i> <i>oís</i> <i>oyen</i>	Imperfect <i>oía</i> <i>oías</i> <i>oía</i> <i>oíamos</i> <i>oíais</i> <i>oían</i>	Preterite <i>oí</i> <i>oíste</i> <i>oyó</i> <i>oímos</i> <i>oísteis</i> <i>oyeron</i>	Future <i>oiré</i> etc.	Conditional <i>oiría</i> etc.
---	---	--	--------------------------------------	--

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present <i>oiga</i> <i>oigas</i> <i>oiga</i> <i>oigamos</i> <i>oigáis</i> <i>oigan</i>	Imperfect <i>oyera/oyese</i> <i>oyeras/oyeses</i> <i>oyera/oyese</i> <i>oyéramos/oyésemos</i> <i>oyerais/oyeseis</i> <i>oyeran/oyesen</i>	Future <i>oyere</i> etc.
---	--	---------------------------------------

13.3.29 Oler 'to smell'

Oler is conjugated like *mover* but shows the predictable spelling *hue* for *ue* when this diphthong is at the beginning of a word:

Infinitive <i>oler</i>	Gerund <i>oliendo</i>
Past Participle <i>olido</i>	Imperative <i>huele oled</i>

INDICATIVE

Present <i>huelo</i> <i>huelas</i> <i>huele</i> <i>olemos</i> <i>oléis</i> <i>huelen</i>	Imperfect <i>olía</i> etc.	Preterite <i>olí</i> etc.	Future <i>oleré</i> etc.	Conditional <i>olería</i> etc.
---	---	--	---------------------------------------	---

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present <i>huela</i> <i>huelas</i> <i>huela</i> <i>olamos</i> <i>oláis</i> <i>huelan</i>	Imperfect <i>oliera/oliese</i> etc.	Future <i>oliere</i> etc.
---	--	--

13.3.30 Pedir 'to ask for'

The endings are regular, but the *e* of the stem changes to *i* when stressed, and also in the gerund, third-person preterite and past and future subjunctive:

Infinitive <i>pedir</i>	Gerund <i>pidiendo</i>
Past Participle <i>pedido</i>	Imperative <i>pide pedid</i>

INDICATIVE

Present <i>pido</i> <i>pides</i> <i>pide</i> <i>pedimos</i> <i>pedís</i> <i>piden</i>	Imperfect <i>pedía</i> etc.	Preterite <i>pedí</i> <i>pediste</i> <i>pidió</i> <i>pedimos</i> <i>pedisteis</i> <i>pidieron</i>	Future <i>pediré</i> etc.	Conditional <i>pediría</i> etc.
--	--	--	--	--

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present <i>pida</i> <i>pidas</i> <i>pida</i> <i>pidamos</i> <i>pidáis</i> <i>pidan</i>	Imperfect <i>pidiera/pidiese</i> <i>pidieras/pidieses</i> <i>pidiera/pidiese</i> <i>pidiéramos/pidiésemos</i> <i>pidierais/pidieseis</i> <i>pidieran/pidiesen</i>	Future <i>pidiere</i> etc.
---	--	---

13.3.31 Perder ‘to lose’

A radical changing verb. The endings are regular, but the *e* of the stem changes to *ie* when stressed. This is a common type of verb:

Infinitive *perder*

Gerund *perdiendo*

Past Participle *perdido*

Imperative *pierde perded*

INDICATIVE

Present

*pierdo
pierdes
pierde
perdemos
perdáis
pierden*

Imperfect

*perdía
etc.*

Preterite

*perdí
etc.*

Future

*perderé
etc.*

Conditional

*perdería
etc.*

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present

*pierda
pierdas
pierda
perdamos
perdáis
pierdan*

Imperfect

*perdiera/perdiese
etc.*

Future

*perdiere
etc.*

13.3.32 Placer ‘to please’

This verb is found only in the third person and even then it is nowadays very rare: *gustar* (regular) is the usual word for ‘to please’.

It is conjugated like *nacer* (see 13.3.10) except that alternative irregular forms (none of them nowadays in use) exist in the third person of three tenses:

Preterite

sing. *plugo*
plur. *pluguieron*

Present subjunctive

plega

Imperfect subjunctive

pluguiera/pluguiese

13.3.33 Poder ‘to be able’

Infinitive *poder*

Gerund *pudiendo*

Past Participle *podido*

Imperative not used

INDICATIVE

Present

*puedo
puedes
puede
podemos
podéis
pueden*

Imperfect

*podía
etc.*

Preterite

*pude
pudiste
pudo
pudimos
pudisteis
pudieron*

Future

*podré
etc.*

Conditional

*podría
etc.*

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present

*pueda
puedas
pueda
podamos
podáis
puedan*

Imperfect

*pudiera/pudiese
pudieras/pudieses
pudiera/pudiese
pudiéramos/pudiésemos
pudierais/pudieseis
pudieran/pudiesen*

Future

*pudiere
etc.*

13.3.34 Poner 'to put'

And also compounds like *componer* 'to compose', *imponer* 'to impose', *proponer* 'to propose', *descomponer* 'to split something up', *suponer* 'to suppose', etc.

Infinitive *poner***Gerund** *poniendo***Past Participle** *puesto***Imperative** *pon*¹⁶ *poned***INDICATIVE**

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>pongo</i>	<i>ponía</i>	<i>puse</i>	<i>pondré</i>	<i>pondría</i>
<i>pones</i>	<i>ponías</i>	<i>pusiste</i>	etc.	etc.
<i>pone</i>	<i>ponía</i>	<i>puso</i>		
<i>ponemos</i>	<i>poníamos</i>	<i>pusimos</i>		
<i>ponéis</i>	<i>poníais</i>	<i>pusisteis</i>		
<i>ponen</i>	<i>ponían</i>	<i>pusieron</i>		

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present	Imperfect	Future
<i>ponga</i>	<i>pusiera/pusiese</i>	<i>pusiere</i>
<i>pongas</i>	<i>pusieras/pusieses</i>	etc.
<i>ponga</i>	<i>pusiera/pusiese</i>	
<i>pongamos</i>	<i>pusiéramos/pusiésemos</i>	
<i>pongáis</i>	<i>pusierais/pusieseis</i>	
<i>pongan</i>	<i>pusieran/pusiesen</i>	

13.3.35 Poseer 'to possess'

This verb and others like it, e.g. *leer* 'to read', *creer* 'to believe', requires that a *y* sound between vowels should be written *y* and not *i*:

Infinitive *poseer***Gerund** *poseyendo***Past Participle** *poseído***Imperative** *posee* *poseed***INDICATIVE**

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>poseo</i>	<i>poseía</i>	<i>poseí</i>	<i>poseeré</i>	<i>poseería</i>
<i>posees</i>	etc.	<i>poseíste</i>	etc.	etc.
<i>posee</i>		<i>poseyó</i>		
<i>poseemos</i>		<i>poseímos</i>		
<i>poseéis</i>		<i>poseísteis</i>		
<i>poseen</i>		<i>poseyeron</i>		

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present	Imperfect	Future
<i>posea</i>	<i>poseyera/poseyese</i>	<i>poseyere</i>
<i>poseas</i>	<i>poseyeras/poseyeses</i>	etc.
<i>posea</i>	<i>poseyera/poseyese</i>	
<i>poseamos</i>	<i>poseyéramos/poseyésemos</i>	
<i>poseáis</i>	<i>poseyerais/poseyeseis</i>	
<i>posean</i>	<i>poseyeran/poseyesen</i>	

13.3.36 Producir 'to produce'

Conjugated like *lucir* except for the preterite and for forms (past and future subjunctive) based on the preterite stem.

¹⁶ Accent on imperative of compounds, e.g. *componer* – *compón* 'compose', *posponer* – *pospón* 'postpone'.

The preterite ending is *-eron* and the past and future subjunctive endings are *-era*, *-ese*, not *-ieron*, *-iera*, *-iese*, etc.

Infinitive *producir*

Past Participle *producido*

Gerund *produciendo*

Imperative *produce producir*

INDICATIVE

Present

*produzco
produces
produce
producimos
producís
producen*

Imperfect

*producía
etc.*

Preterite

*produje
produjiste
produjo
produjimos
produjisteis
produjeron*

Future

*produciré
etc.*

Conditional

*produciría
etc.*

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present

*produzca
produzcas
produzca
produzcamos
produzcáis
produzcan*

Imperfect

*produjera/produjese
produjeras/produjeses
produjera/produjese
produjéramos/produjésemos
produjeráis/produjeseis
produjeran/produjesen*

Future

produjere

Note

Regularized forms of the preterite like **produció*, **conducí* are common mistakes of foreigners and even of some natives, but they are stigmatized.

13.3.37 Querer 'to want'/'to love'

Infinitive *querer*

Past Participle *querido*

Gerund *queriendo*

Imperative *quiere quered*

INDICATIVE

Present

*quiero
quieres
quiere
queremos
queréis
quieren*

Imperfect

*quería
etc.*

Preterite

*quise
quisiste
quiso
quisimos
quisisteis
quisieron*

Future

*querré
querrás
querrá
querremos
querréis
querrán*

Conditional

*querría
querrías
querría
querriamos
querríaís
querrían*

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present

*quiera
quieras
quiera
queramos
queráis
quieran*

Imperfect

*quisiera/quisiese
quisieras/quisieses
quisiera/quisiese
quisiéramos/quisiésemos
quisierais/quisieseis
quisieran/quisiesen*

Future

*quisiere
etc.*

13.3.38 Reír 'to laugh'

This verb is in fact conjugated in the same way as *pedir*, although the absence of a consonant between the vowels obscures the similarity:

Infinitive *reír*

Past Participle *reído*

Gerund *riendo*

Imperative *ríe reíd*

INDICATIVE

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>río</i>	<i>reía</i>	<i>ré</i>	<i>reiré</i>	<i>reiría</i>
<i>ríes</i>	<i>reías</i>	<i>reíste</i>	etc.	etc.
<i>ría</i>	<i>reía</i>	<i>rió</i> ¹⁷		
<i>reímos</i>	<i>reíamos</i>	<i>reímos</i>		
<i>reís</i>	<i>reíais</i>	<i>reísteis</i>		
<i>rían</i>	<i>reían</i>	<i>rieron</i>		

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present	Imperfect	Future
<i>ría</i>	<i>rieral/riese</i>	<i>riere</i>
<i>rías</i>	<i>rieras/rieses</i>	etc.
<i>ría</i>	<i>rieral/riese</i>	
<i>riamos</i>	<i>rieramos/riésemos</i>	
<i>riáis</i>	<i>rierais/rieseis</i>	
<i>rían</i>	<i>rieran/riesen</i>	

13.3.39 *Reñir* 'to scold'

This and other verbs in *-eñir* are conjugated like *pedir*, except that, as usual, *ie > e* and *ió > ó* after *ñ*; see Table 3 item 6, p.200:

Infinitive *reñir*

Past Participle *reñido*

Gerund *reñendo*

Imperative *reñe reñid*

INDICATIVE

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>reño</i>	<i>reñía</i>	<i>reñí</i>	<i>reñiré</i>	<i>reñiría</i>
<i>reñes</i>	etc.	<i>reñiste</i>	etc.	etc.
<i>reñe</i>		<i>reñó</i>		
<i>reñimos</i>		<i>reñimos</i>		
<i>reñís</i>		<i>reñisteis</i>		
<i>reñen</i>		<i>reñeron</i>		

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present	Imperfect	Future
<i>reña</i>	<i>reñeral/reñese</i>	<i>reñere</i>
<i>reñas</i>	<i>reñeras/reñeses</i>	etc.
<i>reña</i>	<i>reñeral/reñese</i>	
<i>reñamos</i>	<i>reñéramos/reñiésemos</i>	
<i>reñáis</i>	<i>reñerais/reñeseis</i>	
<i>reñan</i>	<i>reñeran/reñesen</i>	

13.3.40 *Roer* 'to gnaw'

The bracketed forms are less common alternatives.

Infinitive *roer*

Past Participle *roído*

Gerund *royendo*

Imperative *roe roed*

¹⁷ Note written accent. The only third-person singular preterites in *-io* which have no written accent are *dio* (from *dar*) and *vio* (from *ver*); see 39.2.3 note (i) for further remarks.

INDICATIVE

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>roo</i> (<i>roigo, royo</i>)	<i>roía</i>	<i>roí</i>	<i>roeré</i>	<i>roería</i>
<i>roes</i>	etc.	<i>roíste</i>	etc.	etc.
<i>roe</i>		<i>royó</i>		
<i>roemos</i>		<i>roímos</i>		
<i>roéis</i>		<i>roísteis</i>		
<i>roen</i>		<i>royeron</i>		

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present	Imperfect	Future
<i>roa</i> (<i>roiga, roya</i>)	<i>royera/royese</i>	<i>royere</i>
<i>roas</i> (<i>roigas, royas</i>)	<i>royeras/royeses</i>	etc.
<i>roa</i> (<i>roiga, roya</i>)	<i>royera/royese</i>	
<i>roamos</i> (<i>roigamos, royamos</i>)	<i>royéramos/royésemos</i>	
<i>roáis</i> (<i>roigáis, royáis</i>)	<i>royerais/royeseis</i>	
<i>roan</i> (<i>roigan, royan</i>)	<i>royeran/royesen</i>	

13.3.41 *Saber* 'to know'Infinitive *saber*Gerund *sabiendo*Past Participle *sabido*Imperative *sabe sabed*

INDICATIVE

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>sé</i>	<i>sabía</i>	<i>supe</i>	<i>sabré</i>	<i>sabría</i>
<i>sabes</i>	<i>sabías</i>	<i>supiste</i>	etc.	etc.
<i>sabe</i>	<i>sabía</i>	<i>supo</i>		
<i>sabemos</i>	<i>sabíamos</i>	<i>supimos</i>		
<i>sabéis</i>	<i>sabíais</i>	<i>supisteis</i>		
<i>saben</i>	<i>sabían</i>	<i>supieron</i>		

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present	Imperfect	Future
<i>sepa</i>	<i>supiera/supiese</i>	<i>supiere</i>
<i>sepas</i>	<i>supieras/supieses</i>	etc.
<i>sepa</i>	<i>supiera/supiese</i>	
<i>sepamos</i>	<i>supiéramos/supiésemos</i>	
<i>sepáis</i>	<i>supierais/supieseis</i>	
<i>sepan</i>	<i>supieran/supiesen</i>	

13.3.42 *Salir* 'to go out'/'to leave'Infinitive *salir*Gerund *saliendo*Past Participle *salido*Imperative *sal salid*

INDICATIVE

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>salgo</i>	<i>salía</i>	<i>salí</i>	<i>saldré</i>	<i>saldría</i>
<i>sales</i>	etc.	etc.	etc.	etc.
<i>sale</i>				
<i>salimos</i>				
<i>salís</i>				
<i>salen</i>				

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present

salga
salgas
salga
salgamos
salgáis
salgan

Imperfect

saliera/saliese
 etc.

Future

saliere
 etc.

13.3.43 Sentir 'to feel'

A common type of *-ir* verb. The endings are regular, but the stem vowel changes to *ie* or to *i* in certain forms:

Infinitive *sentir***Past Participle** *sentido***Gerund** *sintiendo***Imperative** *siente sentid*

INDICATIVE

Present

siento
sientes
siente
sentimos
sentís
sienten

Imperfect

sentía
sentías
sentía
sentíamos
sentíais
sentían

Preterite

sentí
sentiste
sintió
sentimos
sentisteis
sintieron

Future

sentiré
 etc.

Conditional

sentiría
 etc.

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present

sienta
sientas
sienta
sintamos
sintáis
sientan

Imperfect

sintiera/sintiese
sintieras/sintieses
sintiera/sintiese
sintiéramos/sintiésemos
sintierais/sintieseis
sintieran/sintiesen

Future

sintiere
 etc.

13.3.44 Ser 'to be'

See Table 4, p.202.

13.3.45 Tener 'to have'/'to hold'**Infinitive** *tener***Past Participle** *tenido***Gerund** *teniendo***Imperative** *ten tened*

INDICATIVE

Present

tengo
tienes
tiene
tenemos
tenéis
tienen

Imperfect

tenía
 etc.

Preterite

tuve
tuviste
tuvo
tuvimos
tuvisteis
tuvieron

Future

tendré
 etc.

Conditional

tendría
 etc.

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present

tenga
tengas
tenga
tengamos
tengáis
tengan

Imperfect

tuviera/tuviese
tuvieras/tuvieses
tuviera/tuviese
tuviéramos/tuviésemos
tuvierais/tuvieseis
tuvieran/tuviesen

Future

tuviere
 etc.

Note

Singular imperative of *detener* 'to detain'/'to stop' = *detén*, *retener* 'to retain' = *retén*.

13.3.46 Traer 'to bring'

This verb also shows the change *ie* > *e* after *j*:

Infinitive *traer*

Past Participle *traído*

Gerund *trayendo*

Imperative *trae traed*

INDICATIVE

Present

traigo
traes
trae
traemos
traéis
traen

Imperfect

traía
traías
traía
traíamos
traíais
traían

Preterite

traje
trajiste
trajo
trajimos
trajisteis
trajeron

Future

traeré
 etc.

Conditional

traería
 etc.

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present

traiga
traigas
traiga
traigamos
traigáis
traigan

Imperfect

trajera/trajese
trajeras/trajeses
trajera/trajese
trajéramos/trajésemos
trajerais/trajeseis
trajeran/trajesen

Future

trajere
 etc.

Note

Truje, *trujiste* etc. is found in Golden-Age texts and survives sporadically in dialects.

13.3.47 Valer 'to be worth'

Infinitive *valer*

Past Participle *valido*

Gerund *valiendo*

Imperative *vale valed*

INDICATIVE

Present

valgo
vales
vale
valemos
valéis
valen

Imperfect

valía
 etc.

Preterite

valí
 etc.

Future

valdré
 etc.

Conditional

valdría
 etc.

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present

valga
valgas
valga
valgamos
valgáis
valgan

Imperfect

valiera/valiese
 etc.

Future

valiere
 etc.

13.3.48 Venir ‘to come’**Infinitive** *venir***Past Participle** *venido***Gerund** *viniendo***Imperative** *ven venid***INDICATIVE**

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>vengo</i>	<i>venía</i>	<i>vine</i>	<i>vendrá</i>	<i>vendría</i>
<i>vienes</i>	<i>venías</i>	<i>viniste</i>	etc.	etc.
<i>viene</i>	<i>venía</i>	<i>vino</i>		
<i>venimos</i>	<i>veníamos</i>	<i>vinimos</i>		
<i>venís</i>	<i>veníais</i>	<i>vinisteis</i>		
<i>vienen</i>	<i>venían</i>	<i>vinieron</i>		

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present	Imperfect	Future
<i>venga</i>	<i>viniera/viniese</i>	<i>viniere</i>
<i>vengas</i>	<i>vinieras/vinieses</i>	etc.
<i>vengas</i>	<i>viniera/viniese</i>	
<i>vengamos</i>	<i>viniéramos/viniésemos</i>	
<i>vengáis</i>	<i>vinierais/vinieseis</i>	
<i>vengan</i>	<i>vinieran/viniesen</i>	

13.3.49 Ver ‘to see’**Infinitive** *ver***Past Participle** *visto***Gerund** *viendo***Imperative** *ve ved***INDICATIVE**

Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>veo</i>	<i>veía</i>	<i>vi</i> (no accent!)	<i>veré</i>	<i>vería</i>
<i>ves</i>	<i>veías</i>	<i>viste</i>	etc.	etc.
<i>ve</i>	<i>veía</i>	<i>vio</i> (no accent!)		
<i>vemos</i>	<i>veíamos</i>	<i>vimos</i>		
<i>veis</i>	<i>veíais</i>	<i>visteis</i>		
<i>ven</i>	<i>veían</i>	<i>vieron</i>		

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present	Imperfect	Future
<i>vea</i>	<i>viera/viese</i>	<i>viere</i>
<i>veas</i>	<i>vieras/vieses</i>	etc.
<i>veas</i>	<i>viera/viese</i>	
<i>veamos</i>	<i>viéramos/viésemos</i>	
<i>veáis</i>	<i>vierais/vieseis</i>	
<i>vean</i>	<i>vieran/viesen</i>	

13.3.50 Yacer ‘to lie’ (as in ‘he lay there’)

Almost never used nowadays: *estar tumbado*, *estar acostado* are the usual translations. It is conjugated like *nacer*, but there are alternative forms (in brackets):

Infinitive *yacer***Past Participle** *yacido***Gerund** *yaciendo***Imperative** *yace/yaz yaced*

INDICATIVE				
Present	Imperfect	Preterite	Future	Conditional
<i>yazco (yazgo, yago)</i>	<i>yacía</i>	<i>yací</i>	<i>yaceré</i>	<i>yacería</i>
<i>yaces</i>	etc.	etc.	etc.	etc.
<i>yace</i>				
<i>yacemos</i>				
<i>yacéis</i>				
<i>yacen</i>				

SUBJUNCTIVE		
Present	Imperfect	Future
<i>yazca (yazga, yaga)</i>	<i>yacieral/yaciese</i>	<i>yaciere</i>
<i>yazcas (yazgas, yagas)</i>		
etc.		

13.4 List of irregular verbs

A number of very rare verbs have been omitted, but this is no guarantee that all of the verbs listed are in common use today. Bracketed forms indicate verbs that are found in the infinitive or past participle forms, which are often the only surviving remains of the verbs that are otherwise obsolete (cf. *aterirse*). For verbs beginning with the prefix in *re-* that are not listed here see the root verb.

Infinitive	model	Infinitive	model
<i>abastecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>anteponer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34
<i>abolir</i>	see 13.3.2	<i>apacentar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>aborrecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>aparecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>abrir</i>	past participle <i>abierto</i>	<i>apetecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>absolver</i>	<i>mover</i> 13.3.27	<i>apostar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
past participle <i>absuelto</i>		regular if it means 'to post a sentry'	
<i>abstenerse</i>	<i>tener</i> 13.3.45	<i>apretar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>abstraer</i>	<i>traer</i> 13.3.46	<i>aprobar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>acaecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>acertar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>acontecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>argüir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13
<i>acordar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	(<i>arrecirse</i>)	<i>abolir</i> 13.3.2)
<i>acostar(se)</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>arrendar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>acrecentar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>arrepentirse</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
<i>adherir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43	<i>ascender</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31
<i>adolescer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>asentar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>adormecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>asentir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
<i>adquirir</i>	see 13.3.3	<i>asir</i>	see 13.3.6
<i>aducir</i>	<i>producir</i> 13.3.36	<i>asolar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>advertir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43	if it means 'to parch'. Usually regular nowadays	
<i>aferrar(se)</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>atañer</i>	see Table 3, p.200, item 6
may be conjugated regularly		third-person sing. only	
<i>agradecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>atender</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31
<i>agredir</i>	see 13.3.4	<i>atenerse</i>	<i>tener</i> 13.3.45
(<i>aguerrir</i>)	<i>abolir</i> 13.3.2)	(<i>aterirse</i>)	<i>abolir</i> 13.3.2)
<i>alentar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>atraer</i>	<i>traer</i> 13.3.46
<i>almorzar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>atravesar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
z > c before e		<i>atribuir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13
<i>amanecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10		
<i>andar</i>	see 13.3.5		
<i>anocheecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10		

Infinitive	model	Infinitive	model
<i>avénir</i>	<i>venir</i> 13.3.48	<i>consolar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>aventar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>consonar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>avergonzar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>constituir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13
<i>c</i> before <i>e</i> , and diphthong spelt <i>üe</i> ,		<i>constreñir</i>	<i>reñir</i> 13.3.39
e.g. subjunctive <i>avergüence</i>		<i>construir</i>	see 13.3.13
<i>balbucir</i>	see 13.3.7	<i>contar</i>	see 13.3.14
<i>bendecir</i>	<i>maldecir</i> 13.3.26	<i>contender</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31
(<i>blandir</i>)	<i>abolir</i> 13.3.2)	<i>contener</i>	<i>tener</i> 13.3.45
<i>bruñir</i>	<i>gruñir</i>	<i>contradecir</i>	<i>decir</i> 13.3.16
see Table 3, p.200,		<i>contraer</i>	<i>traer</i> 13.3.46
item 6		<i>contrahacer</i>	<i>hacer</i> 13.3.22
<i>bullir</i>	<i>zambullir</i>	<i>contraponer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34
see Table 3, p.200,		<i>contravenir</i>	<i>venir</i> 13.3.48
item 6		<i>contribuir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13
<i>caber</i>	see 13.3.8	<i>controvertir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
<i>caer</i>	see 13.3.9	<i>convalecer</i>	- <i>cer</i> 13.3.10
<i>calentar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>convenir</i>	<i>venir</i> 13.3.48
<i>carecer</i>	- <i>cer</i> 13.3.10	<i>convertir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
<i>cegar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>corregir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30
<i>g</i> > <i>gu</i> before <i>e</i>		<i>g</i> > <i>j</i> before <i>a</i> , <i>o</i>	
<i>ceñir</i>	<i>reñir</i> 13.3.39	<i>costar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>cerner</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31	<i>crecer</i>	- <i>cer</i> 13.3.10
<i>cernir</i>	<i>discernir</i> 13.3.17	<i>crear</i>	<i>poseer</i> 13.3.35
<i>cerrar</i>	see 13.3.11	<i>cubrir</i>	past participle
<i>circunscribir</i>	past participle		<i>cubierto</i>
	<i>circunscrito</i>	<i>dar</i>	see 13.3.15
<i>cocer</i>	see 13.3.12	<i>decaer</i>	<i>caer</i> 13.3.9
<i>colar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>decir</i>	see 13.3.16
<i>colegir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30	<i>decrecer</i>	- <i>cer</i> 13.3.10
<i>g</i> > <i>j</i> before <i>a</i> , <i>o</i>		<i>deducir</i>	<i>producir</i> 13.3.36
<i>colgar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>defender</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31
<i>g</i> > <i>gu</i> before <i>e</i>		<i>deferir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
<i>comenzar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>degollar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>z</i> > <i>c</i> before <i>e</i>		diphthong spelt <i>üe</i>	
<i>compadecer</i>	- <i>cer</i> 13.3.10	<i>demoler</i>	<i>mover</i> 13.3.27
<i>comparecer</i>	- <i>cer</i> 13.3.10	<i>demostrar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>competir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30	<i>denegar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>complacer</i>	- <i>cer</i> 13.3.10	<i>g</i> > <i>gu</i> before <i>e</i>	
<i>componer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34	<i>denostar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>comprobar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>dentar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>concebir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30	usually <i>dientar</i> nowadays	
<i>concernir</i>	<i>discernir</i> 13.3.17	<i>deponer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34
<i>concertar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>derrengar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>concluir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13	often regular nowadays; <i>g</i> > <i>gu</i> before <i>e</i>	
<i>concordar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>derretir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30
<i>condescender</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31	<i>derrocar</i>	nowadays regular;
<i>condolerse</i>	<i>mover</i> 13.3.27		<i>c</i> > <i>qu</i> before <i>e</i>
<i>conducir</i>	<i>producir</i> 13.3.36	<i>desacertar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>conferir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43	<i>desacordar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>confesar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>desagradecer</i>	- <i>cer</i> 13.3.10
<i>confluir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13	<i>desalentar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>conmover</i>	<i>mover</i> 13.3.27	<i>desandar</i>	<i>andar</i> 13.3.5
<i>conocer</i>	- <i>cer</i> 13.3.10	<i>desaparecer</i>	- <i>cer</i> 13.3.10
<i>conseguir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30	<i>desapretar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>gu</i> > <i>g</i> before <i>a</i> , <i>o</i>		<i>desaprobar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>consentir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43		

Infinitive	model	Infinitive	model
<i>desasosegar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>desvergonzarse</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
g > gu before e		z > c before e; diphthong spelt <i>üe</i>	
<i>desatender</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31	<i>detener</i>	<i>tener</i> 13.3.45
<i>desavenir</i>	<i>venir</i> 13.3.48	<i>detraer</i>	<i>traer</i> 13.3.46
<i>descender</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31	<i>devolver</i>	<i>mover</i> 13.3.27
<i>desceñir</i>	<i>reñir</i> 13.3.39	past participle <i>devuelto</i>	
<i>descolgar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>diferir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
g > gu before e		<i>digerir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
<i>descollar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>diluir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13
<i>descomedirse</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30	<i>discernir</i>	see 13.3.17
<i>descomponer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34	<i>disentir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
<i>desconcertar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>disminuir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13
<i>desconocer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>disolver</i>	<i>mover</i> 13.3.27
<i>desconsolar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	past participle <i>disuelto</i>	
<i>descontar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>disponer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34
<i>desconvenir</i>	<i>venir</i> 13.3.48	<i>distender</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31
<i>describir</i>	past participle	<i>distraer</i>	<i>traer</i> 13.3.46
	<i>descrito</i>	<i>distribuir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13
<i>descubrir</i>	past participle	<i>divertir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
	<i>descubierto</i>	<i>doler</i>	<i>mover</i> 13.3.27
<i>desdecir</i>	<i>decir</i> 13.3.16	<i>dormir</i>	see 13.3.18
<i>desempedrar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>elegir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30
<i>desengrosar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	g > j before a, o	
<i>desentenderse</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31	<i>embebecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>desenterrar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>embellecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>desenvolver</i>	<i>mover</i> 13.3.27	<i>embestir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30
past participle <i>desenvuelto</i>		<i>embravecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>desfallecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>embrutecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>desgobernar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>empedrar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>deshacer</i>	<i>hacer</i> 13.3.22	<i>empequeñecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>deshelar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>empezar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>desherrar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	z > c before e	
<i>desleír</i>	<i>reír</i> 13.3.38	<i>empobrecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>deslucir</i>	<i>lucir</i> 13.3.25	<i>enaltecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>desmembrar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>enardecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>desmentir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43	<i>encanecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>desmerecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>encarecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>desobedecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>encender</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31
<i>desoír</i>	<i>oír</i> 13.3.28	<i>encerrar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>desollar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>encomendar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>despedir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30	<i>encontrar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>despedrar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>encubrir</i>	past participle
<i>despertar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11		<i>encubierto</i>
<i>despezar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>endurecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
usually <i>despiezar</i> , regular; z > c before e		<i>enflaquecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>desplacer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>enfurecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>desplegar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>engrandecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
g > gu before e; now often regular		<i>engreírse</i>	<i>reír</i> 13.3.38
<i>despoblar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>engrosar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>desproveer</i>	<i>poseer</i> 13.3.35	now usually regular	
past participle <i>desprovisto/desproveído</i>		<i>engullir</i>	<i>zambullir</i>
<i>desteñir</i>	<i>reñir</i> 13.3.39		see Table 3,
<i>desterrar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>enloquecer</i>	p.200, item 6
<i>destituir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13	<i>enmendar</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>destruir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13	<i>enmohecer</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>desvanecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10		-cer 13.3.10

Infinitive	model	Infinitive	model
<i>enmudecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>gemir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30
<i>ennegrecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>gobernar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>ennoblecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>gruñir</i>	see Table 3, p.200, item 6
<i>enorgullecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>guarecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>enriquecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>guarnecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>enronquecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>haber</i>	see Table 6, p.204
<i>ensangrentar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>hacer</i>	see 13.3.22
<i>ensordecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>heder</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31
<i>entender</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31	<i>helar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>enternecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>henchir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30
<i>enterrar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>hender</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31
<i>entreabrir</i>	past participle <i>entreabierto</i>	<i>hendir</i>	<i>discernir</i> 13.3.17
<i>entrededir</i>	<i>decir</i> 13.3.16	<i>herir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
<i>entreoír</i>	<i>oír</i> 13.3.28	<i>herrar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>entretener</i>	<i>tener</i> 13.3.45	<i>heroir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
<i>entrever</i>	<i>ver</i> 13.3.49	<i>holgar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
third-person present <i>entrevé(n)</i>		g > gu before e	
<i>entristecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>hollar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>entumecer(se)</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>huir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13
<i>envanecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>humedecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>envejecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>impedir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30
<i>envilecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>imponer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34
<i>envolver</i>	<i>mover</i> 13.3.27	imperative singular	<i>impón</i>
past participle <i>envuelto</i>		<i>incensar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>equivaler</i>	<i>valer</i> 13.3.47	<i>incluir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13
<i>erguir</i>	see 13.3.19	<i>indisponer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34
<i>errar</i>	see 13.3.20	<i>inducir</i>	<i>producir</i> 13.3.36
<i>escabullirse</i>	<i>zambullir</i>	<i>inferir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
	see Table 3, p.200, item 6	<i>influir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13
<i>escarmentar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>ingerir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
<i>escarnecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>injerir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
<i>escocer</i>	<i>cocer</i> 13.3.12	<i>inquirir</i>	<i>adquirir</i> 13.3.3
<i>escribir</i>	past participle <i>escrito</i>	<i>instituir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13
<i>esforzar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>instruir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13
z > c before e		<i>interferir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
<i>establecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>interponer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34
<i>estar</i>	see Table 5, p.203	<i>intervenir</i>	<i>venir</i> 13.3.48
<i>estremecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>introducir</i>	<i>producir</i> 13.3.36
<i>estreñir</i>	<i>reñir</i> 13.3.39	<i>intuir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13
<i>excluir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13	<i>invernar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>expedir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30	now usually regular	
<i>exponer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34	<i>invertir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
<i>extender</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31	<i>investir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30
<i>extraer</i>	<i>traer</i> 13.3.46	<i>ir</i>	see 13.3.23
<i>fallecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>jugar</i>	see 13.3.24
<i>favorecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>languidecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>florecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>leer</i>	<i>poseer</i> 13.3.35
<i>fluir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13	<i>llover</i>	<i>mover</i> 13.3.27
<i>fortalecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>lucir</i>	see 13.3.25
<i>forzar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>maldecir</i>	see 13.3.26
z > c before e		<i>manifestar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>fregar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>mantener</i>	<i>tener</i> 13.3.45
g > gu before e		<i>medir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30
<i>freír</i>	<i>reír</i> 13.3.38	<i>mentar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
past participle <i>frito</i>		<i>mentir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
		<i>merecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10

Infinitive	model	Infinitive	model
<i>merendar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>producir</i>	see 13.3.36
<i>moler</i>	<i>mover</i> 13.3.27	<i>proferir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
<i>morder</i>	<i>mover</i> 13.3.27	<i>promover</i>	<i>mover</i> 13.3.27
<i>morir</i>	see 13.3.18	<i>proponer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34
<i>mostrar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>proseguir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30
<i>mover</i>	see 13.3.27	gu > g before a	
<i>mullir</i>	<i>zambullir</i>	<i>prostituir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13
	see Table 3, p.200	<i>proveer</i>	<i>poseer</i> 13.3.35
<i>nacer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	past participle <i>provisto/proveído</i>	
<i>negar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>provenir</i>	<i>venir</i> 13.3.48
g > gu before e		<i>podrir</i>	regular;
<i>nevar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11		see also <i>podrir</i>
<i>obedecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>quebrar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>obscurer</i>	see <i>oscurecer</i>	<i>querer</i>	see 13.3.37
<i>obstruir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13	<i>raer</i>	<i>caer</i> 13.3.9
<i>obtener</i>	<i>tener</i> 13.3.45	rayo is an alternative to raigo	
<i>ofrecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>reaparecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>oír</i>	see 13.3.38	<i>reblandecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>oler</i>	see 13.3.29	<i>recaer</i>	<i>caer</i> 13.3.9
<i>oponer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34	<i>recluir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13
<i>oscurecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>recocer</i>	<i>cocer</i> 13.3.12
<i>pacar</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>recomendar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>padecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>reconocer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>palidecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>reconvenir</i>	<i>venir</i> 13.3.48
<i>parecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>recordar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>pedir</i>	see 13.3.30	<i>recostar(se)</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>pensar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>reducir</i>	<i>producir</i> 13.3.36
<i>perecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>reelegir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30
<i>permanecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	g > j before a, o	
<i>perseguir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30	<i>referir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
gu > g before a, o		<i>reforzar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>pertenecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	z > c before e	
<i>pervertir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43	<i>refregar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>placer</i>	see 13.3.32	g > gu before e	
<i>plegar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>regar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
g > gu before e		g > gu before e	
<i>poblar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>regir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30
<i>poder</i>	see 13.3.33	g > j before a, o	
<i>podrir</i>	variant of <i>podrir</i>	<i>rehacer</i>	<i>hacer</i> 13.3.22
-u- used for all forms except		<i>reír</i>	see 13.3.38
past participle <i>podrido</i>		<i>rejuvenecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10
<i>poner</i>	see 13.3.34	<i>remendar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>poseer</i>	see 13.3.35	<i>remorder</i>	<i>mover</i> 13.3.27
<i>posponer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34	<i>remover</i>	<i>mover</i> 13.3.27
tú imperative <i>pospón</i>		<i>rendir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30
<i>predecir</i>	<i>decir</i> 13.3.16	<i>renegar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>predisponer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34	g > gu before e	
<i>preferir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43	<i>renovar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>prescribir</i>	past participle <i>prescrito</i>	<i>reñir</i>	see 13.3.39
<i>presuponer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34	<i>repetir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30
<i>prevalecer</i>	-cer 13.3.10	<i>replegar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>prevaler</i>	<i>valer</i> 13.3.47	g > gu before e	
<i>prevenir</i>	<i>venir</i> 13.3.48	<i>repoblar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>prever</i>	<i>ver</i> 13.3.49	<i>reponer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34
third-person present <i>prevé(n)</i>		<i>reprobar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>probar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>reproducir</i>	<i>producir</i> 13.3.36

Infinitive	model	Infinitive	model
<i>requerbrar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>sobreponer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34
<i>requerir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43	<i>sobresalir</i>	<i>salir</i> 13.3.42
<i>resentirse</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43	<i>sobrevenir</i>	<i>venir</i> 13.3.48
<i>resollar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>sofreír</i>	<i>reír</i> 13.3.38
<i>resolver</i>	<i>mover</i> 13.3.27	past participle <i>sofrito</i>	
past participle <i>resuelto</i>		<i>soldar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>resonar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>soler</i>	<i>mover</i> 13.3.27
<i>resplandecer</i>	- <i>cer</i> 13.3.10	future, conditional and	
<i>restablecer</i>	- <i>cer</i> 13.3.10	past and future subjunctives not used	
<i>restituir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13	<i>soltar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>estregar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	past participle <i>suelto</i>	
g > gu before e		<i>sonar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>retemblar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>sonreír</i>	<i>reír</i> 13.3.38
<i>retener</i>	<i>tener</i> 13.3.45	<i>soñar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>reteñir</i>	<i>reñir</i> 13.3.39	<i>sosegar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>retorcer</i>	<i>cocer</i> 13.3.12	g > gu before e	
c > z before a, o		<i>sostener</i>	<i>tener</i> 13.3.45
<i>retraer</i>	<i>traer</i> 13.3.46	<i>soterrar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>retribuir</i>	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13	<i>subarrendar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>retrotraer</i>	<i>traer</i> 13.3.46	<i>subscribir</i>	see <i>suscribir</i>
<i>reventar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>subvenir</i>	<i>venir</i> 13.3.48
<i>reverdecen</i>	- <i>cer</i> 13.3.10	<i>subvertir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
<i>revertir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43	<i>sugerir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
<i>revestir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30	<i>suponer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34
<i>revolar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>suscribir</i> ¹⁸	past participle
<i>revolcar(se)</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14		<i>suscrito</i>
c > qu before e		<i>sustituir</i> ¹⁹	<i>construir</i> 13.3.13
<i>resolver</i>	<i>mover</i> 13.3.27	<i>sustraer</i> ²⁰	<i>traer</i> 13.3.46
past participle <i>revuelto</i>		<i>tañer</i>	see Table 3,
<i>robustecer</i>	- <i>cer</i> 13.3.10	<i>temblar</i>	p.200, item 6
<i>rodar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>tender</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>roer</i>	see 13.3.40	<i>tener</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31
<i>rogar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>tentar</i>	see 13.3.45
g > gu before e		<i>teñir</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>romper</i>	past participle <i>roto</i>	<i>torcer</i>	<i>reñir</i> 13.3.39
<i>saber</i>	see 13.3.41	c > z before a, o	<i>cocer</i> 13.3.12
<i>salir</i>	see 13.3.42	<i>tostar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>satisfacer</i>	<i>hacer</i> 13.3.22	<i>traducir</i>	<i>producir</i> 13.3.36
<i>seducir</i>	<i>producir</i> 13.3.36	<i>traer</i>	see 13.3.46
<i>segar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>tra(n)scender</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31
g > gu before e		<i>transcender</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31
<i>seguir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30	<i>transcribir</i>	past participle
gu > g before a or o			<i>transcrito</i>
<i>sembrar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>trasferir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
<i>sentar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>transgredir</i>	<i>abolir</i> 13.3.2
<i>sentir</i>	see 13.3.43	sometimes regular	
<i>ser</i>	see Table 4, p.202	<i>transponer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34
<i>serrar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>trasegar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11
<i>servir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30	g > gu before e	
<i>sobrentender/</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31	<i>traslucir</i>	<i>lucir</i> 13.3.25
<i>sobreentender</i>			

¹⁸ less commonly *subscribir*¹⁹ less commonly *substituir*²⁰ less commonly *substraer*

Infinitive	model	Infinitive	model
<i>trasponer</i>	<i>poner</i> 13.3.34	<i>venir</i>	see 13.3.48
<i>trastrócar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>ver</i>	see 13.3.49
<i>c > qu</i> before <i>e</i>		<i>verter</i>	<i>perder</i> 13.3.31
<i>trocar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>vestir</i>	<i>pedir</i> 13.3.30
<i>c > qu</i> before <i>e</i>		<i>volar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>tronar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14	<i>volcar</i>	<i>contar</i> 13.3.14
<i>tropezar</i>	<i>cerrar</i> 13.3.11	<i>c > qu</i> before <i>e</i>	
<i>z > c</i> before <i>e</i>		<i>volver</i>	<i>mover</i> 13.3.27
<i>tullir</i>	<i>zambullir</i>	past participle <i>vuelto</i>	
	see Table 3, p.200	<i>yacer</i>	see 13.3.50
	item 6	<i>zaherir</i>	<i>sentir</i> 13.3.43
<i>valer</i>	see 13.3.47	<i>zambullir</i>	see Table 3, p.200, item

TABLE I Overview of the Spanish verb²¹

Spanish verbs may appear in the following forms:

Infinitive	<i>hablar</i>	discussed in Chapter 18
Gerund	<i>hablando</i>	discussed in Chapter 20
Past participle	<i>hablado</i>	discussed in Chapter 19
Imperative	<i>habla (tú) hablad (vosotros/vosotras)</i> <i>hable (usted) hablen (ustedes)</i>	discussed in Chapter 17

ACTIVE VOICE

INDICATIVE

The uses of the indicative tense forms are discussed in Chapter 14.

Present	<i>yo hablo, etc.</i>	I speak
Imperfect	<i>yo hablaba, etc.</i>	I was speaking
Preterite	<i>yo hablé, etc.</i>	I spoke
Future	<i>yo hablaré, etc.</i>	I shall/will speak
Conditional	<i>yo hablaría, etc.</i>	I would speak
Perfect	<i>yo he hablado, etc.</i>	I have spoken
Pluperfect	<i>yo había hablado, etc.</i>	I had spoken
Future Conditional	<i>yo hablaré hablado, etc.</i>	I will have spoken
Conditional etc.	<i>yo hablaría hablado, or yo hubiera hablado</i>	I would have spoken
Pretérito anterior	<i>yo hube hablado</i>	I had spoken, etc. (see 14.10.4)

CONTINUOUS (discussed in Chapter 15)

Present	<i>yo estoy hablando, etc.</i>	I'm speaking
Imperfect	<i>yo estaba hablando, etc.</i>	I was speaking
Preterite	<i>yo estuve hablando, etc.</i>	I spoke/had a talk
Future	<i>yo estaré hablando, etc.</i>	I'll be speaking
Conditional	<i>yo estaría hablando, etc.</i>	I'd be speaking
Perfect	<i>yo he estado hablando, etc.</i>	I have been speaking

²¹ The following remarks apply throughout these verb tables:

- (i) *Vosotros* forms are replaced by *ustedes* forms throughout Latin America.
- (ii) The *-ra* form of *hubiera* is an optional alternative for the conditional *habría* in the conditional tenses of the perfect.
- (iii) The *-ra* and *-se* forms of the past subjunctive are interchangeable except in the cases mentioned at 16.2.3.
- (iv) The future subjunctive is almost obsolete. See 16.17.
- (v) All compound tenses are formed with the auxiliary *haber* (see p.204) and the past participle, which does *not* agree in number or gender in these tenses.

TABLE I *Continued*

Pluperfect	<i>yo había estado hablando, etc.</i>	I had been speaking
Future	<i>yo habré estado hablando, etc.</i>	I shall/will have been speaking
Conditional	<i>yo habría estado hablando, etc.</i>	I would have been speaking

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present	<i>(que) yo hable, etc.</i>
Imperfect	<i>(que) yo hablara/(que) yo hablase, etc.</i>
Future	<i>(que) yo hablare, etc.</i>
Perfect	<i>(que) yo haya hablado, etc.</i>
Pluperfect	<i>(que) yo hubiera/hubiese hablado, etc.</i>
Future	<i>(que) yo hubiere hablado, etc.</i>

CONTINUOUS

Present	<i>(que) yo esté hablando, etc.</i>
Imperfect	<i>(que) yo estuviera/estuviese hablando, etc.</i>
Future	<i>(que) yo estuviere hablando, etc.</i>
Perfect	<i>(que) yo haya estado hablando, etc.</i>
Pluperfect	<i>(que) yo hubiera/hubiese estado hablando, etc.</i>
Future	not used

PASSIVE VOICE

There are a number of ways of translating the English passive, the most common being the passive with *ser*, e.g. *Esta novela fue publicada en México*, or (in the case of the third person) the pronominal form, e.g. *Esta novela se publicó en México*. These forms, not always interchangeable, are discussed in Chapter 28, but a selection of the chief tenses are shown here by way of illustration. The participle in the *ser* form must agree in number and gender with the subject of *ser*:

INDICATIVE (third person only shown)

Present	<i>es publicado/se publica</i>	it is published
Imperfect	<i>era publicado/se publicaba</i>	it used to be published
Preterite	<i>fue publicado/se publicó</i>	it was published
Future	<i>será publicado/se publicará</i>	it will be published
Conditional	<i>sería publicado/se publicaría</i>	it would be published
Perfect	<i>ha sido publicado/se ha publicado</i>	it has been published
Pluperfect	<i>había sido publicado/se había publicado</i>	it had been published
Future	<i>habrá sido publicado/se habrá publicado</i>	it will have been published
Conditional	<i>habría sido publicado/se habría publicado</i>	it would have been published

CONTINUOUS

The passive continuous with *ser* is not very common. It is discussed at 15.4.

Present	<i>está siendo publicado/está publicándose</i>	it is being published
Imperfect	<i>estaba siendo publicado/estaba publicándose</i>	it was being published
Future	<i>estará siendo publicado/estará publicándose</i>	it will be being published
Conditional	<i>estaría siendo publicado/estaría publicándose</i>	it would be being published
Perfect	<i>ha estado siendo publicado/ha estado publicándose (very rare)</i>	
Pluperfect	<i>había estado siendo publicado/había estado publicándose (very rare)</i>	

SUBJUNCTIVE

Present	<i>(que) sea publicado/(que) se publique</i>
Imperfect	<i>(que) fuera publicado/(que) se publicara/(que) fuese publicado/(que) se publicase</i>
Future	<i>(que) fuere publicado/(que) se publicare</i>

TABLE 1 *Continued*

CONTINUOUS

The subjunctive continuous passive is also extremely rare in practice.

Present	(<i>que</i>) <i>esté siendo publicado</i> / <i>(que) se esté publicando</i>
Imperfect	(<i>que</i>) <i>estuviera/estuviese siendo publicado</i> / <i>(que) se estuviera/estuviese publicando</i>

TABLE 2 *Conjugation of regular verbs*

The three verbs *hablar* 'to speak', *comer* 'to eat' and *vivir* 'to live' conjugate regularly throughout and are unaffected by spelling changes.

Infinitive	<i>hablar</i>	<i>comer</i>	<i>vivir</i>
Stem	<i>habl-</i>	<i>com-</i>	<i>viv-</i>
Gerund	<i>hablando</i>	<i>comiendo</i>	<i>viviendo</i>
Past participle	<i>hablado</i>	<i>comido</i>	<i>vivido</i>
Imperative	<i>habla</i>	<i>come</i>	<i>vive</i>
(<i>Vosotros/as</i>)	<i>hablad</i>	<i>comed</i>	<i>vivid</i>
(<i>Usted</i>)	<i>hable</i>	<i>coma</i>	<i>viva</i>
(<i>Ustedes</i>)	<i>hablen</i>	<i>coman</i>	<i>vivan</i>

INDICATIVE

Present	<i>hablo</i>	<i>hablamos</i>	<i>como</i>	<i>comemos</i>	<i>vivo</i>	<i>vivimos</i>
	<i>hablas</i>	<i>habláis</i>	<i>comes</i>	<i>coméis</i>	<i>vives</i>	<i>vivís</i>
	<i>habla</i>	<i>hablan</i>	<i>come</i>	<i>comen</i>	<i>vive</i>	<i>viven</i>
Perfect	<i>he hablado, etc.</i>		<i>he comido, etc.</i>		<i>he vivido, etc.</i>	
Imperfect	<i>hablaba</i>	<i>hablábamos</i>	<i>comía</i>	<i>comíamos</i>	<i>vivía</i>	<i>vivíamos</i>
	<i>hablabas</i>	<i>hablabais</i>	<i>comías</i>	<i>comíais</i>	<i>vivías</i>	<i>vivíais</i>
	<i>hablaba</i>	<i>hablaban</i>	<i>comía</i>	<i>comían</i>	<i>vivía</i>	<i>vivían</i>
Preterite	<i>hablé</i>	<i>hablamos</i>	<i>comí</i>	<i>comimos</i>	<i>viví</i>	<i>vivimos</i>
	<i>hablaste</i>	<i>hablasteis</i>	<i>comiste</i>	<i>comisteis</i>	<i>viviste</i>	<i>vivisteis</i>
	<i>habló</i>	<i>hablaron</i>	<i>comió</i>	<i>comieron</i>	<i>vivió</i>	<i>vivieron</i>
Pluperfect	<i>había hablado, etc.</i>		<i>había comido, etc.</i>		<i>había vivido, etc.</i>	
Pretérito anterior	<i>hube hablado, etc.</i>		<i>hube comido, etc.</i>		<i>hube vivido, etc.</i>	
Future	<i>hablaré</i>	<i>hablaremos</i>	<i>comeré</i>	<i>comeremos</i>	<i>viviré</i>	<i>viviremos</i>
	<i>hablarás</i>	<i>hablaréis</i>	<i>comerás</i>	<i>comeréis</i>	<i>vivirás</i>	<i>viviréis</i>
	<i>hablará</i>	<i>hablarán</i>	<i>comerá</i>	<i>comerán</i>	<i>vivirá</i>	<i>vivirán</i>
Future perfect	<i>habré hablado, etc.</i>		<i>habré comido, etc.</i>		<i>habré vivido, etc.</i>	
Conditional	<i>hablaría</i>	<i>hablaríamos</i>	<i>comería</i>	<i>comeríamos</i>	<i>viviría</i>	<i>viviríamos</i>
	<i>hablarías</i>	<i>hablaríais</i>	<i>comerías</i>	<i>comeríais</i>	<i>vivirías</i>	<i>viviríais</i>
	<i>hablaría</i>	<i>hablarían</i>	<i>comería</i>	<i>comerían</i>	<i>viviría</i>	<i>vivirían</i>

TABLE 2 *Continued*

Perfect conditional					
<i>habría hablado, etc.</i>		<i>habría comido, etc.</i>		<i>habría vivido, etc.</i>	
or					
<i>hubiera hablado, etc.</i>		<i>hubiera comido, etc.</i>		<i>hubiera vivido, etc.</i>	
SUBJUNCTIVE					
Present					
<i>hable</i>	<i>hablemos</i>	<i>coma</i>	<i>comamos</i>	<i>viva</i>	<i>vivamos</i>
<i>hables</i>	<i>habléis</i>	<i>comas</i>	<i>comáis</i>	<i>vivas</i>	<i>viváis</i>
<i>hable</i>	<i>hablen</i>	<i>coma</i>	<i>coman</i>	<i>viva</i>	<i>vivan</i>
Perfect					
<i>haya hablado, etc.</i>		<i>haya comido, etc.</i>		<i>haya vivido, etc.</i>	
Imperfect					
(a)-ra form					
<i>hablara</i>	<i>habláramos</i>	<i>comiera</i>	<i>comiéramos</i>	<i>viviera</i>	<i>viviéramos</i>
<i>hablaras</i>	<i>hablarais</i>	<i>comieras</i>	<i>comierais</i>	<i>vivieras</i>	<i>vivierais</i>
<i>hablara</i>	<i>hablaran</i>	<i>comiera</i>	<i>comieran</i>	<i>viviera</i>	<i>vivieran</i>
(b)-se form					
<i>hablase</i>	<i>hablásemos</i>	<i>comiese</i>	<i>comiésemos</i>	<i>viviese</i>	<i>viviésemos</i>
<i>hablases</i>	<i>hablaseis</i>	<i>comieses</i>	<i>comieseis</i>	<i>vivieses</i>	<i>vivieseis</i>
<i>hablase</i>	<i>hablasen</i>	<i>comiese</i>	<i>comiesen</i>	<i>viviese</i>	<i>viviesen</i>
Pluperfect					
<i>hubiera hablado, etc.</i>		<i>hubiera comido, etc.</i>		<i>hubiera vivido, etc.</i>	
<i>hubiese hablado, etc.</i>		<i>hubiese comido, etc.</i>		<i>hubiese vivido, etc.</i>	
Future					
<i>hablare</i>	<i>habláremos</i>	<i>comiere</i>	<i>comiéremos</i>	<i>viere</i>	<i>viviéremos</i>
<i>hablares</i>	<i>hablareis</i>	<i>comiereis</i>	<i>comiereis</i>	<i>vriereis</i>	<i>viviereis</i>
<i>hablare</i>	<i>hablaren</i>	<i>comiere</i>	<i>comieren</i>	<i>viere</i>	<i>vivieren</i>

TABLE 3 *Spelling changes*

The following spelling rules apply to all Spanish verbs, regular and irregular:

(1) Infinitives ending in *-zar*, *-cer* and *-cir*:

z is spelt c before i or e.

c is spelt z before a, o (although in the majority of verbs ending in *-cer* c > zc before a, o):

<i>rezar</i> 'to pray'		<i>vencer</i> 'to defeat'		<i>esparcir</i> 'to scatter'	
Present indicative					
<i>rezo</i>	<i>rezamos</i>	<i>venzo</i>	<i>vencemos</i>	<i>esparzo</i>	<i>esparcimos</i>
<i>rezas</i>	<i>rezáis</i>	<i>vences</i>	<i>vencéis</i>	<i>esparces</i>	<i>esparcís</i>
<i>reza</i>	<i>rezan</i>	<i>vence</i>	<i>vencen</i>	<i>esparce</i>	<i>esparcen</i>
Preterite					
<i>recé</i>	<i>rezamos</i>	<i>vencí</i>	<i>vencimos</i>	<i>esparcí</i>	<i>esparcimos</i>
<i>rezaste</i>	<i>rezasteis</i>	<i>venciste</i>	<i>vencisteis</i>	<i>esparciste</i>	<i>esparcisteis</i>
<i>rezó</i>	<i>rezaron</i>	<i>venció</i>	<i>vencieron</i>	<i>esparció</i>	<i>esparcieron</i>
Present subjunctive					
<i>rece</i>	<i>recemos</i>	<i>venza</i>	<i>venzamos</i>	<i>esparza</i>	<i>esparzamos</i>
<i>reces</i>	<i>recéis</i>	<i>venzas</i>	<i>venzáis</i>	<i>esparzas</i>	<i>esparzáis</i>
<i>rece</i>	<i>recen</i>	<i>venza</i>	<i>venzan</i>	<i>esparza</i>	<i>esparzan</i>

No other forms affected.

Most verbs in *-cer* and *-cir* are irregular and should be checked against the list at 13.4.

TABLE 3 Continued

(2) Infinitives ending in *-car, -quir*:

c is spelt *qu* before *e* and *u*.

qu is spelt *c* before *a, o*.

sacar 'to take out'

delinquir 'to commit a crime'

Present indicative

<i>saco</i>	<i>sacamos</i>	<i>delinco</i>	<i>delinquimos</i>
<i>sacas</i>	<i>sacáis</i>	<i>delinques</i>	<i>delinquís</i>
<i>saca</i>	<i>sacan</i>	<i>delinque</i>	<i>delinquen</i>

Preterite

<i>saqué</i>	<i>sacamos</i>	<i>delinquí</i>	<i>delinquimos</i>
<i>sacaste</i>	<i>sacasteis</i>	<i>delinquiste</i>	<i>delinquisteis</i>
<i>sacó</i>	<i>sacaron</i>	<i>delinquirió</i>	<i>delinquieron</i>

Present subjunctive

<i>saque</i>	<i>saquemos</i>	<i>delinca</i>	<i>delincamos</i>
<i>saques</i>	<i>saquéis</i>	<i>delincas</i>	<i>delincáis</i>
<i>saque</i>	<i>saquen</i>	<i>delinca</i>	<i>delincan</i>

No other forms affected.

Delinquir seems to be the only living example of a verb ending in *-quir* and it is very rarely used.

(3) Infinitives ending in *-gar, -guir*.

g is spelt *gu* before *i* and *e*.

gu is spelt *g* before *a, o*.

llegar 'to arrive'

seguir 'to follow' (radical changing, like *pedir* 13.3.43)

Present indicative

<i>llego</i>	<i>llegamos</i>	<i>sigo</i>	<i>seguimos</i>
<i>llegas</i>	<i>llegáis</i>	<i>sigues</i>	<i>seguís</i>
<i>llega</i>	<i>llegan</i>	<i>sigue</i>	<i>siguen</i>

Preterite

<i>llegué</i>	<i>llegamos</i>	<i>seguí</i>	<i>seguimos</i>
<i>llegaste</i>	<i>llegasteis</i>	<i>seguiste</i>	<i>seguisteis</i>
<i>llegó</i>	<i>llegaron</i>	<i>siguió</i>	<i>siguieron</i>

Present subjunctive

<i>llegue</i>	<i>lleguemos</i>	<i> siga</i>	<i>sigamos</i>
<i>llegues</i>	<i>lleguéis</i>	<i> sigas</i>	<i>sigáis</i>
<i>llegue</i>	<i>lleguen</i>	<i> siga</i>	<i>sigan</i>

No other forms affected.

(4) Infinitives ending in *-guar*:

The *u* is written *ü* before *e*. See 13.2.5 for examples.

(5) Infinitives ending in *-ger, -gir*:

g is spelt *j* before *a, o*.

TABLE 3 *Continued*

<i>proteger</i> 'to protect'			<i> fingir</i> 'to pretend'		
Present indicative					
<i>protejo</i>		<i>protegemos</i>		<i>finjo</i>	<i> fingimos</i>
<i>proteges</i>		<i>protegéis</i>		<i>finjes</i>	<i> fingís</i>
<i>protege</i>		<i>protegen</i>		<i>finje</i>	<i> fingen</i>
Present subjunctive					
<i>proteja</i>		<i>protejamos</i>		<i>finja</i>	<i> fingamos</i>
<i>protejas</i>		<i>protejáis</i>		<i>finjas</i>	<i> fingáis</i>
<i>proteja</i>		<i>protejan</i>		<i>finja</i>	<i> finjan</i>
No other forms affected.					
Verbs ending in <i>-jar</i> , e.g. <i>amortajar</i> , and <i>-jer</i> , e.g. <i>tejer</i> , retain the <i>j</i> throughout.					
(6) Infinitives ending in <i>-ñer</i> , <i>ñir</i> , <i>-lir</i> :					
<i>ie</i> is spelt <i>e</i> .					
<i>ió</i> is spelt <i>ó</i> .					
<i>tañer</i> 'to chime'		<i>gruñir</i> 'to grunt'		<i>zambullir</i> 'to dive'	
Gerund					
<i>tañendo</i>		<i>gruñendo</i>		<i>zambullendo</i>	
Preterite					
<i>tañí</i>	<i>tañimos</i>	<i>gruñí</i>	<i>gruñimos</i>	<i>zambullí</i>	<i>zambullimos</i>
<i>tañiste</i>	<i>tañisteis</i>	<i>gruñiste</i>	<i>gruñisteis</i>	<i>zambulliste</i>	<i>zambullisteis</i>
<i>tañó</i>	<i>tañeron</i>	<i>gruñó</i>	<i>gruñeron</i>	<i>zambulló</i>	<i>zambulleron</i>
Imperfect subjunctive					
<i>tañera</i>	<i>tañéramos</i>	<i>gruñera</i>	<i>gruñéramos</i>	<i>zambullera</i>	<i>zambullé-ramos</i>
<i>tañeras</i>	<i>tañerais</i>	<i>gruñeras</i>	<i>gruñerais</i>	<i>zambulleras</i>	<i>zambullerais</i>
<i>tañera</i>	<i>tañeran</i>	<i>gruñera</i>	<i>gruñeran</i>	<i>zambullera</i>	<i>zambulleran</i>
<i>tañese</i>	<i>tañésemos</i>	<i>gruñese</i>	<i>gruñésemos</i>	<i>zambullese</i>	<i>zambullésemos</i>
<i>tañeses</i>	<i>tañeseis</i>	<i>gruñeses</i>	<i>gruñeseis</i>	<i>zambulleses</i>	<i>zambulleseis</i>
<i>tañese</i>	<i>tañesen</i>	<i>gruñese</i>	<i>gruñesen</i>	<i>zambullese</i>	<i>zambullesen</i>
Future subjunctive					
<i>tañere</i> , etc.		<i>gruñere</i> , etc.		<i>zambullere</i> , etc.	
(7) Verbs in <i>-eer</i> : all conjugate like <i>poseer</i> at 13.3.35.					
(8) Verbs in <i>-uir</i> : all conjugate like <i>construir</i> at 13.3.13.					

TABLE 4 *Conjugation of ser 'to be'*

Infinitive		<i>ser</i>			
Gerund		<i>siendo</i>			
Past participle		<i>sido</i>			
Imperative		<i>sé</i> , ²² <i>sed</i> (<i>vosotros/as</i>),		<i>sea</i> (<i>usted</i>), <i>sean</i> (<i>Ustedes</i>)	
INDICATIVE					
Present		Imperfect		Preterite	
<i>soy</i>	<i>somos</i>	<i>era</i>	<i>éramos</i>	<i>fui</i> ²³	<i>fuímos</i>
<i>eres</i>	<i>sois</i>	<i>eras</i>	<i>erais</i>	<i>fuiste</i>	<i>fuisteis</i>
<i>es</i>	<i>son</i>	<i>era</i>	<i>eran</i>	<i>fue</i> ²³	<i>fueron</i>

²² The accent distinguishes it from the pronoun *se*.²³ No written accent since 1959.

TABLE 4 *Continued*

Future		Conditional					
seré	seremos	sería	seríamos				
serás	seréis	serías	seríais				
será	serán	sería	serían				
SUBJUNCTIVE							
Present		Imperfect(-ra)	Imperfect (-se)	Future			
sea	seámos	fuera	fuéramos	fuese	fuésemos	fuere	fuéremos
seas	seáis	fuera	fuerais	fueses	fueseis	fuere	fuereis
sea	sean	fuera	fuera	fuese	fuesen	fuere	fuere
COMPOUND TENSES							
INDICATIVE							
Perfect		he sido, etc.		I have been			
Pluperfect		había sido, etc.		I had been			
Future		habré sido, etc.		I will have been			
Conditional		habría/hubiera sido, etc.		I would have been			
SUBJUNCTIVE							
Perfect		haya sido, etc.					
Pluperfect		hubiera/hubiese sido, etc.					
Future		hubiere sido, etc.					
CONTINUOUS ²⁴							
INDICATIVE							
Present		estoy siendo, etc.		I'm being			
Imperfect		estaba siendo, etc.		I was being			
Preterite		not used					
Future		estará siendo, etc.		I will be being			
Conditional		estaría siendo, etc.		I would be being			
SUBJUNCTIVE							
Present		(que) esté siendo, etc.					
Imperfect		(que) estuviera/estuviese siendo					

TABLE 5 *Conjugation of estar* 'to be'

(The difference between *estar* and *ser* is discussed in Chapter 29.)

Infinitive	estar				
Gerund	estando				
Past participle	estado				
Imperative²⁵	estate, estaos (vosotros/as) estese (usted), estense (ustedes)				
INDICATIVE					
Present		Imperfect		Preterite	
estoy	estamos	estaba	estábamos	estuve	estuvimos
estás	estáis	estabas	estabais	estuviste	estuvisteis
está	están	estaba	estaban	estuvo	estuvieron

²⁴ Continuous forms of *ser* are increasingly common in the modern language, but are viewed with suspicion by some purists. See 15.4.

²⁵ The pronominal forms are used in the imperative. See 17.2.1 and 26.6.4 for further discussion.

TABLE 5 *Continued*

Future		Conditional			
<i>estaré</i>	<i>estaremos</i>	<i>estaría</i>	<i>estaríamos</i>		
<i>estarás</i>	<i>estaréis</i>	<i>estarías</i>	<i>estaríais</i>		
<i>estará</i>	<i>estarán</i>	<i>estaría</i>	<i>estarían</i>		
SUBJUNCTIVE					
Present		Imperfect		or	
<i>esté</i>	<i>estemos</i>	<i>estuviera</i>	<i>estuviéramos</i>	<i>estuviese</i>	<i>estuviésemos</i>
<i>estés</i>	<i>estéis</i>	<i>estuvieras</i>	<i>estuvierais</i>	<i>estuvieses</i>	<i>estuvieseis</i>
<i>esté</i>	<i>estén</i>	<i>estuviera</i>	<i>estuvieran</i>	<i>estuviese</i>	<i>estuviesen</i>
Future					
<i>estuviere</i>	<i>estuviéremos</i>				
<i>estuvieres</i>	<i>estuviereis</i>				
<i>estuviere</i>	<i>estuvieren</i>				
COMPOUND TENSES					
INDICATIVE					
Perfect		<i>he estado</i>			
Pluperfect		<i>había estado</i>			
Future		<i>habré estado</i>			
Conditional		<i>habría/hubiera estado</i>			
SUBJUNCTIVE					
Perfect		<i>haya estado, etc.</i>			
Pluperfect		<i>hubiera/hubiese estado, etc.</i>			
Future		<i>hubiere estado, etc.</i>			
CONTINUOUS					
Estar is not used in the continuous: * <i>está estando</i> is not Spanish.					

TABLE 6 *Conjugation of auxiliary verb haber*

This verb is used to form the compound tenses of all regular and irregular verbs. (For discussion of compound tenses see 14.8-10.) Compound forms of *haber* are not used to form compound tenses: there is nothing corresponding to the French *il a eu dit*. *Haber* is also used in the third person only as the main 'existential' verb, cf. *Había muchos* 'There were a lot', *Habrà menos de cinco* 'There will be less than five'; when used thus its present indicative form is *hay*. See Chapter 30 for discussion.

Infinitive		<i>haber</i>			
Gerund		<i>habiendo</i>			
Past participle		<i>habido</i>			
Imperative		(not used)			
INDICATIVE					
Present		Imperfect		Preterite	
<i>he</i>	<i>hemos</i> ²⁶	<i>había</i>	<i>habíamos</i>	<i>hube</i>	<i>hubimos</i>
<i>has</i>	<i>habéis</i>	<i>habías</i>	<i>habíais</i>	<i>hubiste</i>	<i>hubisteis</i>
<i>ha</i>	<i>han</i>	<i>había</i>	<i>habían</i>	<i>hubo</i>	<i>hubieron</i>
<i>(hay)</i>					

²⁶ *Habemos* is used in the phrase *nos las habemos* 'we're dealing with', e.g. *En don Luis nos las habemos nuevamente con el Hombre y la Mujer* (J. Montesinos, quoted by Seco (1992), 214) 'In Don Luis we are dealing once again with Man and Woman'.

TABLE 6 *Continued*

Future		Conditional ²⁷	
<i>habré</i>	<i>habremos</i>	<i>habría</i>	<i>habríamos</i>
<i>habrás</i>	<i>habréis</i>	<i>habrías</i>	<i>habrías</i>
<i>habrá</i>	<i>habrán</i>	<i>habría</i>	<i>habrían</i>
Perfect	Pluperfect	Pretérito anterior	
<i>ha habido</i>	<i>había habido</i>	(not used)	
etc.	etc.		
Perfect conditional			
<i>habría habido or hubiera habido</i>			
etc.			
SUBJUNCTIVE			
Present		Perfect	
<i>haya</i>	<i>hayamos</i>	<i>haya</i>	<i>habido</i>
<i>hayas</i>	<i>hayáis</i>	etc.	
<i>haya</i>	<i>hayan</i>		
Imperfect		(b) -se form	
(a) -ra form		<i>hubiese</i>	<i>hubiésemos</i>
<i>hubiera</i>	<i>hubiéramos</i>	<i>hubieses</i>	<i>hubieseis</i>
<i>hubieras</i>	<i>hubierais</i>	<i>hubiese</i>	<i>hubiesen</i>
<i>hubiera</i>	<i>hubieran</i>		
Pluperfect		Future (obsolete in normal styles)	
<i>hubiera habido or</i>		<i>hubiere</i>	<i>hubiéremos</i>
<i>hubiese habido, etc.</i>		<i>hubieres</i>	<i>hubiereis</i>
		<i>hubiere</i>	<i>hubieren</i>

TABLE 7 *Full conjugation of the compound tenses of ver*

Note the irregular past participle *visto*.

INDICATIVE			
Perfect 'I have seen'		Pluperfect 'I had seen', etc.	
<i>he visto</i>	<i>hemos visto</i>	<i>había visto</i>	<i>habíamos visto</i>
<i>has visto</i>	<i>habéis visto</i>	<i>habías visto</i>	<i>habíais visto</i>
<i>ha visto</i>	<i>han visto</i>	<i>había visto</i>	<i>habían visto</i>
Future perfect 'I shall have seen'		Conditional 'I would have seen', etc.	
<i>habré visto</i>	<i>habremos visto</i>	<i>habría visto</i>	<i>habríamos visto</i>
<i>habrás visto</i>	<i>habréis visto</i>	<i>habrías visto</i>	<i>habrías visto</i>
<i>habrá visto</i>	<i>habrán visto</i>	<i>habría visto</i>	<i>habrían visto</i>
Pretérito anterior 'I had seen'			
<i>hube visto</i>	<i>hubimos visto</i>		
<i>hubiste visto</i>	<i>hubisteis visto</i>		
<i>hubo visto</i>	<i>hubieron visto</i>		

²⁷ The *-ra* subjunctive form is also commonly used for conditional, i.e. *Te hubiera llamado* for *Te habría llamado* 'I would have phoned you'. See 14.7.5 for discussion.

TABLE 7 *Continued*

SUBJUNCTIVE			
Perfect			
<i>haya visto</i>	<i>hayamos visto</i>		
<i>hayas visto</i>	<i>hayáis visto</i>		
<i>haya visto</i>	<i>hayan visto</i>		
Imperfect			
<i>hubiera visto</i>	<i>hubiéramos visto</i>	or	<i>hubiésemos visto</i>
<i>hubieras visto</i>	<i>hubierais visto</i>	<i>hubiese visto</i>	<i>hubieseis visto</i>
<i>hubiera visto</i>	<i>hubieran visto</i>	<i>hubiese visto</i>	<i>hubiesen visto</i>

14

Use of indicative (non-continuous) verb forms

This chapter discusses the use of the indicative, non-continuous verb forms. Continuous forms (*estoy hablando, estamos trabajando, etc.*) are discussed in Chapter 15; the subjunctive is discussed in Chapter 16.

The range of possible forms of a typical regular verb is shown in Table 1, p.197.

14.1 Names of the tenses

The traditional names of the tenses are misleading because, like the word 'tense' itself, they too strongly suggest that the main function of the various tense forms is to indicate time. However, the names are so entrenched that to use a more scientific terminology would be unhelpful.

The various names given by grammarians to the Spanish tenses are very confusing, and the problem is worsened by the fact that the Spanish word *pretérito* simply means 'past', whereas the English 'preterite'/(US) 'preterit' is the name of a specific type of past tense:

Imperfect (B & B, R & S, H & N)¹, *pretérito imperfecto* (Academia, Seco), *copretérito* (Bello): *hablaba, decía*

Preterite (B & B, R & S), *pretérito perfecto simple* (Academia) *pretérito indefinido* (Seco), *pretérito perfecto absoluto* (Gili y Gaya), *pretérito* (Bello), past definite (H & N): *hablé, dije*

Perfect (B & B, R & S, H & N), *pretérito perfecto compuesto* (Academia), *pretérito perfecto* (Seco), *pretérito perfecto actual* (Gili y Gaya), *antepresente* (Bello), also sometimes called in English 'present perfect': *he hablado, has dicho*

Pluperfect (B & B, R & S, H & N), *pretérito pluscuamperfecto* (Academia, Seco), *antecopretérito* (Bello): *había hablado, había dicho*

Pretérito anterior (B & B, Academia, Seco), preterite perfect (R & S), *antepretérito* (Gili y Gaya, Bello), past anterior (H & N): *hube hablado, hubo dicho*

The conditional (*hablaría, diría*) is called *el potencial* by Seco and some other grammarians, *el condicional* by most writers and in the Academy's *Esbozo*.

The future tense (*hablaré, diré*) is called the *futuro imperfecto* by Seco to distinguish it from the future perfect/*futuro perfecto* (*habré hablado, habré dicho*).

¹ B & B Butt & Benjamin, 2nd edition; R & S Ramsey and Spaulding (1958); H & N Harmer and Norton (1957).

14.2 Tense and aspect in Spanish: general remarks

Any attempt at a brief overview of the role of tense and aspect in the Spanish verb system would be confusing, but the following points deserve emphasis:

(a) There is no 'present' tense in Spanish, if by 'present' is meant a tense form whose sole function is to express present time. The uses of the simple 'present' *hablo, fumas, van*, are several and varied. See 14.3 for further discussion.

(b) There is no 'future' tense in Spanish, in the sense that there is no single verb form whose *exclusive* function is to indicate future time. See 14.6 for further discussion.

(c) The difference between the preterite and imperfect tenses, e.g. *quiso – quería*, and to some extent between the pluperfect and *pretérito anterior*, e.g. *había terminado – hube terminado*, involves a distinction between perfective and imperfective *aspect*, i.e. between actions that were or were not completed in the past. English does not systematically indicate the difference between complete and incomplete aspect, so that without further information one cannot tell whether the correct translation of a form like 'I went' should be *yo fui* (completed) or *yo iba* (incomplete).

This difference between completed and incomplete past events may be especially subtle for English-speakers when it comes to differentiating sentences like *Era un problema difícil* and *Fue un problema difícil*, which can really only be translated 'It was a difficult problem'. See 14.5.7 for further discussion.

(d) Unlike French and German, Spanish has a full range of continuous forms which misleadingly resemble the English progressive form: *está lloviendo* 'it's raining', *estabas pensando* 'you were thinking', *he estado comiendo* 'I've been eating'.

The main problem lies in the distinguishing the present continuous from the ordinary present tense: the difference between *lee* and *está leyendo* is neither the same nor as clear-cut as the difference between 'he reads' and 'he's reading'. Nor is the difference between the imperfect continuous *estaba hablando* 'I was speaking' and the preterite continuous *estuve hablando* 'I had a talk'/'I spoke' (for a specific length of time) immediately obvious to English-speakers. See 15.2.3 for a discussion of this problem.

(e) The difference between the preterite *hablé* 'I spoke' and the perfect *he hablado* 'I've spoken' is maintained in spoken as well as written Spanish, whereas it is blurred in French, German and Italian. However, this difference only partly coincides with the distinction between 'I spoke' and 'I've spoken'; see particularly 14.9.3. The difference between the perfect and preterite is also governed by different rules in most of Latin America; see 14.9.7. for more details.

14.3 Uses of the present tense

For the use of the present in conditional sentences, e.g. *Si sales, compra pan* 'If you go out, buy some bread', see 25.2.

14.3.1 Present tense to indicate timeless or habitual events that still occur

This is probably the commonest use of this verb form:

<i>Llueve mucho en Irlanda</i>	It rains a lot in Ireland
<i>Fumo más de sesenta al día</i>	I smoke more than sixty a day
<i>María es venezolana</i>	Maria's Venezuelan
<i>Las gaviotas comen peces</i>	Sea-gulls eat fish
<i>No tengo tarjeta de crédito</i>	I don't have a credit card
<i>Me deprime comer sola (C. Martín Gaité, Spain)</i>	Eating on my own depresses me
<i>Los que son creyentes tienen ese consuelo (M. Puig, Argentina)</i>	Those who are believers have that consolation

14.3.2 The present tense for events occurring in the present

The chief problem in this case is how to distinguish it from the present continuous.

In English there is very little overlap between the simple present and the progressive: 'he comes' for 'he is coming' is archaic. The difference between the Spanish simple present and the present continuous is not so clear-cut. The following remarks should be read together with the discussion of the continuous form in Chapter 15.

(a) With some verbs and in some contexts there is often only a slight difference between the simple present and the continuous:

<i>Escribe una novela</i>	He's writing a novel
<i>Está escribiendo una novela</i>	
<i>¿Qué haces?</i>	What are you doing?
<i>¿Qué estás haciendo?</i>	
<i>Cuando lo vi lavaba/estaba lavando su coche</i>	When I saw him he was washing his car

(b) The simple present is used with verbs that denote states rather than actions:

<i>¿Por qué estás tan triste?</i>	Why are you so sad?
<i>Hace frío</i>	It's cold
<i>Parece cansada</i>	She seems tired
<i>¿Cómo brilla la luna!</i>	Isn't the moon bright!
<i>Hoy lleva traje de chaqueta</i>	She's wearing a suit today

Occasionally the continuous may be optionally used to emphasize an unusual or surprising state, as in *Está haciendo mucho calor* 'It's very hot (lately)'. See 15.2.2b for explanation.

(c) The simple present is used for events that happen in the present but are not necessarily actually in progress now. In other words, it is used for events that are just about to happen or have just happened or which are really states or habitual actions rather than events that are actually in progress:

<i>Acusamos recibo de su carta del 3 de enero</i>	We acknowledge receipt of your letter of January 3
<i>A mí me suena poco natural</i>	It sounds unnatural to me
<i>La oposición considera una maniobra el aperturismo anunciado por el régimen</i>	The opposition considers the liberalization policy announced by the regime to be a manoeuvre

¿Por qué te metes en ese asunto?

Why are you getting involved in that business?

¿Qué dices?

What did you say (just then)? (or 'What do you say?' or 'What are you saying?')

¿No oyes los perros?

Can't you hear the dogs?

¡Que me ahogo!

I'm drowning!

¡Ya voy!

I'm coming!

Espérate que meto esto en el horno

Wait while I put this in the oven

Merino pasa la pelota a Andreas (soccer commentary)

Merino passes the ball to Andreas

None of the sentences under (c) refers to an event which is strictly speaking in progress *now*, but to events that have either just happened (*¿Qué dices?*, *Pasa la pelota*), are about to happen (*¡Que me ahogo!*), or which are present but not necessarily happening at this moment, e.g. *La oposición considera . . .*, *¿Por qué te metes? . . .*'.

Nevertheless, the present and continuous forms sometimes overlap in meaning (see 15.1.2-3 for further discussion).

14.3.3 The presente histórico or historic present

Use of the present tense to refer to the past is much favoured as a way of dramatizing descriptive passages in literature. But it also occurs in colloquial language, as in familiar English ('Mrs Brown comes up to me and says . . .').

Translation of literary uses of the present tense by an English present often produces an unfortunate effect.

En los primeros matorrales del bosquecillo, frena a la mula y sus ojos claros, ávidos, buscan en una y otra dirección (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)

He stopped his mule at the first thickets of the copse and his bright, eager eyes sought in both directions

Fue sensacional: Pedro entra del brazo de la chica sin ojos más que para ella. Yo venga a hacerle señas y él ni caso. Se sientan los dos y al volver la cabeza para atraer la atención del camarero se da cuenta de que Antonio está allí (Colloquial Peninsular Spanish²)

It was amazing. Pedro comes in arm-in-arm with the girl and he's got eyes only for her. I keep on making signs at them, but he pays no attention. They both sit down and when he turns his head to get the waiter's attention he realizes that Antonio's there

Note

The historic present is normal after *por poco* 'all but' and *casi* 'nearly': *Me caí por unas escaleras y por poco/casi me rompo el tobillo* 'I fell down a flight of stairs and nearly broke my ankle'.

This usage is not universal: *Por poco me hizo llorar de lo cariñosa que es* (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue) 'She's so affectionate she nearly made me cry'.

14.3.4 Present tense used as an imperative

This is frequent in everyday speech to produce a rather abrupt imperative: *Tú te callas* 'You just keep quiet'.

All matters connected with the imperative are discussed in Chapter 17.

14.3.5 Use of the present to ask permission

The present is much used when asking for someone's consent:

² *Venga a . . .* is a colloquial Peninsular expression that emphasizes repetition. The familiar style of the passage makes translation by the English present possible.

¿Te lo traigo yo?
 ¿Escribo a los abuelos para decirselo?
 ¿Llamo para ver si ha venido?

Shall I bring it for you?
 Shall I write to our grandparents to tell them?
 Shall I ring to see whether he's come?

14.4 The preterite: general

The Spanish preterite is past in time and perfective in aspect, i.e. it refers to actions viewed as completed in the past. Occasionally it is inchoative (inceptive) in aspect, i.e. it describes events as *beginning* in the past (see 14.4.2).

Yo fui differs from the English form 'I was' in being marked for time and aspect, whereas the English form is marked only for time. Compare *Yo fui jefe de departamento* 'I was head of department' (and then stopped) and *Yo era jefe de departamento* 'I was head of department' (at the time and may still be).

Similarly, 'He got cross with his dog' means either *Se enfadó con su perro* or *Se enfadaba con su perro*. Correct translation of the English simple past thus requires a decision about which verbal aspect is implied by the English form.

Some English past verb forms are unambiguously imperfect, e.g. 'he **was getting angry**', 'he **used to get angry**', 'at that time he **would get up** at ten-thirty'. Such forms almost always call for translation by the Spanish imperfect.

14.4.1 Preterite used to indicate an event that is past and complete

The difference between the preterite and imperfect often expresses an idea that is not easily translated into English. Compare *Tuvimos que atravesar dos desiertos para llegar al oasis* 'We had to cross two deserts to get to the oasis (and we did)' and *Teníamos que atravesar dos desiertos para llegar al oasis* 'We had (still) to cross two deserts to get to the oasis'. The first (perfective aspect) looks back on the crossing as accomplished, the second (imperfective aspect) envisages the crossing as still to be made and does not in itself tell us whether it took place or not.

Further examples:

Ayer anduve más de quince kilómetros

Yesterday I walked more than fifteen kilometers

Fue un error no devolverle el dinero

It was a mistake not to return the money to him (we didn't)

La fiesta fue un éxito

The party was a success

Primero fui carpintero, después fui taxista, y después fui domador de leones

First I was a carpenter, then I was a taxi driver and then I was a lion tamer

Tuve el sarampión cuando era pequeño

I had measles when I was a child

The preterite may therefore show that a process or event has reached completion:

Cuando el café estuvo listo le alcanzó una tacita (E. Sábato, Argentina)

When the coffee was ready she handed him a small cup

La chica avanzó hacia él, y cuando estuvo a su lado le dijo . . . (E. Sábato, Argentina)

The girl advanced towards him, and when she reached his side, said to him . . .

La conversación se fue espaciando (ir + gerund suggests a longish process, *fue* shows the process was complete)

The conversation gradually petered out

Notes

(i) The imperfect is used for characteristics as opposed to actions or states, cf. *Mi tía era soltera. Nunca estuvo casada* 'My aunt was a spinster. She was never married'. Compare also *Miguel era poeta* 'Miguel was a poet' and *Miguel fue director gerente* 'Miguel was (i.e. 'worked as') chief executive/(British) managing director'. *?Fue poeta* sounds like ? 'He worked as a poet'.

Use of the preterite for a characteristic is a stylistic idiosyncrasy: *Sir Thomas Browne (1605-82) supo el griego, el latín, el francés, el italiano y el español, y fue uno de los primeros hombres de letras que estudiaron anglosajón* (J.L. Borges, Argentina, more usually . . . *sabía griego*) 'Sir Thomas Browne (1605-82) knew Greek, Latin, French, Italian and Spanish, and was one of the first men of letters to study Anglo-Saxon'.

For a further comparison of preterite and imperfect see 14.5.7.

(ii) In 'cleft' sentences (discussed at 36.2), the tense of *ser* is virtually always dictated by the tense of the other verb(s): *Fue usted quien lo hizo* 'It was you who did it', *Era usted quien lo hacía* 'It was you who used to do it'.

(iii) The preterite is very often used in Latin-American Spanish where the perfect is used in Spain. See 14.9.7 for discussion.

14.4.2 Preterite used to indicate the beginning of a state or action

The preterite may be inchoative in meaning (i.e. indicate the beginning of an action). Compare *Mi hija habló a los once meses* (i.e. *empezó a hablar*) 'My daughter started talking at eleven months' and *Mi hija hablaba a los once meses* 'My daughter was talking by eleven months'. Also *Mi nieto anduvo al año* 'My grandson started walking at the age of one'.

14.4.3 Preterite used to indicate certainty in the future

The preterite is occasionally used to indicate an absolute certainty in the future:

Cuando llegue, llegó

She'll be here when she's here (and that's that)!

Cuando se acabe, se acabó

When it's finished, it's finished

Para las dos ya lo acabé (Mexican example from J.M. Lope Blanch (1991); Spain *ya lo tendré acabado*)

I'll have it finished by two o'clock

Nos fuimos (colloquial Latin American; Spain *nos vamos*)

We're going/We're leaving right now (lit. 'we left')

14.4.4 Preterite for events occurring within a finite period

The preterite tense must be used for an event that continued for a finite period of time and then ended. By 'finite' is meant a period of time of a specific length, i.e. whose beginning and end are known:

Estuve destinado en Bilbao dos años

I was posted in Bilbao for two years

Te olvidas del tiempo que estuviste casado

You're forgetting the time you were married

Los dinosaurios reinaron sobre la tierra durante millones de años

The dinosaurs reigned on Earth for millions of years

La ETA tuvo menos actividad durante el régimen de Franco que al instalarse la democracia (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)

ETA (Basque terrorist group) was less active during the Franco régime than when democracy was introduced

Durante años no pudimos hablar de otra cosa (G. García Márquez, Colombia)

For years we could talk of nothing else

Que yo haya oído, en toda mi vida supe de dos casos (D. Navarro Gómez, Spain)

As far as I've heard, I've known of two cases in the whole of my life

Notes

(i) The period of time is often implied rather than explicit. Use of the preterite may, for example, denote a lifetime envisaged as a finite period: *Siempre dormía como dormió su padre, con el arma escondida dentro de la funda de la almohada* (G. García Márquez, Colombia) 'He always used to sleep as his father (had) slept, with his gun hidden in his pillowcase', *Siempre procuré pasarlo bien* 'I always tried to have a good time', *Nunca me hizo gracia ese hombre* 'I never really liked that man'.

(ii) In sentences involving phrases like *todos los días*, *todos los años*, the beginning and end of the period are not specified so the imperfect must be used: *Todos los veranos veraneaban en San Sebastián* 'Every summer they spent their holidays/vacation in San Sebastian', *Todas las mañanas regaba el jardín* 'He watered the garden every morning', *Cuando yo era pequeño yo lelo veía pasar casi todos los días* 'When I was little I saw him pass nearly every day'.

(iii) If the period is specified but the action consists of a series of repeated discontinuous events, either form is possible, the imperfect apparently being commoner: *Aquella semana se levantaba/levantó a las siete, y desayunaba/desayunó a las ocho* 'That week he rose at seven, and breakfasted at eight', *El verano pasado salía/salió todos los días con él* 'Last summer she went out with him every day', *Aquel año trabajaba/trabajó mucho* 'He worked hard that year'.

14.4.5 Special meanings of the preterite of some verbs

Some verbs require special translations when they appear in the preterite. This is especially true of the auxiliary verbs *deber*, *querer*, *poder*, *saber*, *soler*, which are discussed in Chapter 21.

Other verbs affected are:

Tener: the preterite often means 'to receive'/'to get', the imperfect means 'had' in the sense of 'was in my possession':

Tuve la impresión de que . . .

I got the impression that . . .

Tenía la impresión de que . . .

I had the impression that . . .

Tuve una carta

I got/received a letter

Cuando tuvo ocasión de estudiar consiguió con la universidad a distancia el título de ingeniero (Cambio16, Spain)

When he got the chance to study, he graduated as an engineer from the Open University³

Conocer: the preterite means 'to meet for the first time', the imperfect means 'to be acquainted with':

Conocí a Antonia

I met Antonia (for the first time)

Conocía a Antonia

I knew Antonia

14.5 The imperfect: general

The Spanish imperfect form expresses past time and incomplete (imperfective) aspect. The English simple past is marked only for time, so that 'I drank two glasses of wine with my lunch' is strictly speaking untranslatable into Spanish unless the context supplies clues about the aspect of the event: 'When I was young, I drank (i.e. 'used to drink') two glasses every day' (imperfective: *bebía dos vasos*) and 'Last night I drank two glasses' (perfective: *anoche bebí*).

English forms like 'I used to drink', 'I was drinking', 'I would (habitually) drink' are unambiguously imperfective and almost always require translation by the Spanish imperfect.

³ i.e. the public university whose courses are transmitted on radio and TV.

In colloquial language the Spanish imperfect may be a substitute for the conditional. See 14.5.2 and 25.5 for discussion.

14.5.1 Imperfect tense to denote incomplete actions

The imperfect form is used for past events that were incomplete at the time. It often indicates that an event was in progress in the past without reference to its beginning or end. The imperfect is therefore used:

(a) To indicate any state or event already in progress when something else happened. It is thus the correct tense for background descriptions:

<i>Me levanté y descorrí las cortinas. Hacía un día espléndido</i>	I got up and drew the curtains. It was a splendid day
<i>Como el cielo estaba despejado fuimos a la playa</i>	Since the sky was clear we went to the beach
<i>Yo volvía del cine cuando vi a Niso</i>	I was coming back from the cinema when I saw Niso
<i>Los monumentos y estatuas que adornaban los paseos y las plazas fueron triturados . . .</i> (E. Mendoza, Spain)	The monuments and statues that adorned the avenues and squares were pulverized
<i>Volví a la sala, pero él ya no estaba</i> (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)	I went back to the living room, but he was no longer there

(b) To indicate states or actions that continued in the past for an unspecified period. It is thus much used for characteristics, situations and habitual actions.

<i>Matías era un hombre alto, calvo y un poco cargado de hombros</i>	Matías was a tall, bald, slightly round-shouldered man
<i>Le exasperaban estas comidas mexicanas de cuatro o cinco horas de duración</i> (C. Fuentes, Mexico)	These Mexican meals lasting four or five hours exasperated him
<i>Doña Amalia, por otra parte, era obesa, y se negaba a reconocer que la gula era peor pecado y más insalubre vicio que la dipsomanía</i> (C. Barral, Spain)	Doña Amalia, on the other hand, was overweight, and refused to recognise that greed was a worse sin and more unhealthy vice than dipsomania

If the time period is specified, see 14.4.4.

(c) To express an event that is felt to have already begun at the time of some completed event:

<i>Me marchaba ya cuando has llamado</i> (Lat. Am. <i>llamaste</i>) ⁴	I was just leaving when you rang
--	----------------------------------

14.5.2 Imperfect for the conditional

The imperfect is commonly used as a colloquial alternative to the conditional to indicate an immediate future. This does not apply when the conditional is used for approximations or suppositions, as at 14.7.2:

<i>Prometió que venía/vendría</i>	He promised he would come/he was coming
<i>Juró que lo hacía/haría</i>	He swore he'd do it
<i>Aunque no me gustara, me casaba/casaría con ella</i>	I'd marry her even if I didn't like her

⁴ In Spain *llamaste* would indicate that the phone conversation is no longer in progress. See 14.9.7 for further discussion.

Pensé que ya no venías/vendrías

I thought you wouldn't come/weren't coming any more

But this is not possible with *ser* or if the future is not immediate:

Creía que sería posible

I thought it would be possible

Juró que me amaría siempre (not amaba . . .)

He swore he would love me always

This usage is especially frequent with *poder* and *deber* to show that someone should or could have acted differently in the past, e.g. *Podías/Podrías haberlo hecho, ¿no?* 'You could have done it, couldn't you?'; see 21.2.3d and 21.3.3.

14.5.3 *Hablaba or estaba hablando?*

If the event is not habitual and is truly past (e.g. 'I was leaving the next day' is in fact a future in the past), the difference between the continuous and non-continuous imperfect is usually neutralized:

Yo hablaba/Estaba hablando con los vecinos cuando llegaron los bomberos

I was talking to the neighbours when the firemen came

But the continuous is not used with some verbs of motion. See 15.1.2(b).

14.5.4 Imperfect in children's language

An interesting use of the imperfect is found in children's language:

Vamos a jugar a que yo era un vaquero y tú eras un indio

Let's pretend I'm a cowboy and you're an Indian

14.5.5 Imperfect to make courteous requests

The imperfect can be used to show courtesy in requests and enquiries:

¿Qué deseaba?

What would you like?

Perdone, quería hablar con el director

Excuse me, I'd like a word with the manager

14.5.6 Imperfect used for preterite in journalism

In newspaper styles the imperfect is sometimes used as an alternative to the preterite in order to produce a dramatically drawn-out effect:

La historia de cómo . . . un hombre de cincuenta años mataba en la Noche Vieja de 1977 a su amante, una niña de 14 años, es de nuevo actualidad (Cambio16, Spain; or mató)

The story of how a man of fifty killed his lover, a girl of 14, on New Year's Eve 1977, is in the news again

Un cuarto de hora después . . . dos grapos asesinaban a un policía armado (El País; or asesinaron)

A quarter of an hour later two members of GRAPO⁵ murdered an armed policeman

14.5.7 Imperfect or preterite? Translation problems

The difference between the preterite and imperfect is often elusive for English-speakers as the following examples show:

Fue un error decírselo

It was a mistake to tell him (we committed it)

Era un error decírselo

It was a mistake to tell him (we may or may not have committed it)

⁵ A terrorist group active in Spain.

<i>El problema fue difícil</i>	The problem was difficult (but it doesn't exist any more)
<i>El problema era difícil</i>	The problem was difficult (at the time, and perhaps still is)
<i>Tuve que hablar con ella</i>	I had to talk to her (and did)
<i>Tenía que hablar con ella</i>	I had to talk to her (and may or may not have done)
<i>Estuve enfermo</i>	I was ill/(US) 'sick' (and got better)
<i>Estaba enfermo</i>	I was ill/sick (at the time and may or may not still be)
<i>Fui a preguntar</i>	I went to ask (and did)
<i>Iba a preguntar</i>	I was going to ask
<i>No le gustó la comida</i>	He didn't enjoy his meal (but he ate it)
<i>No le gustaba la comida</i>	He didn't like his meal (and may or may not have gone on to eat it)
<i>Estuve hablando con ella</i>	I had a talk with her
<i>Estaba hablando con ella</i>	I was (in the process of) talking to her
<i>Cuando estuve en Cuba . . .</i>	When I visited Cuba . . .
<i>Cuando yo estaba en Cuba . . .</i>	When I was in Cuba . . .
<i>Creí que hablabas en serio</i>	I thought you were talking seriously
<i>Creía que hablabas en serio</i> (can also mean more or less the same as <i>creí que . . .</i>)	I thought/used to think you talked seriously

14.6 Future tense: general

Spanish has several ways of expressing the future, and the so-called 'future tense' (*hablaré, vendrás*) is not the most common in everyday speech (from which it is said to be disappearing except in its 'suppositional' role described at 14.6.3):

(a) <i>Esta noche vamos al cine</i>	Tonight we're going to the cinema
(b) <i>Esta noche vamos a ir al cine</i>	Tonight we're going to go to the cinema
(c) <i>Esta noche iremos al cine</i>	Tonight we'll go to the cinema
(d) <i>Esta noche hemos de ir al cine</i>	Tonight we're to go to the cinema

(a) is typically a description of an event which is pre-arranged or is a scheduled event;

(b) is a foreseen or 'intentional' future and it is often an informal substitute for the future tense proper *iremos, seré*, etc;

(c) is less common in colloquial language and very often excludes the idea of pre-arrangement. Consequently it may sound rather uncertain or, depending on tone and context, may sound like an order or promise;

(d) (discussed at 21.4.1) is sometimes heard in Latin America with a future meaning, but in the Peninsula it implies obligation, and is not very common. It is very common in Mexico as an alternative to *deber de* (the latter is discussed at 21.3.2).⁶

⁶ *Para terminar, el capitán ha de haberse quejado de su soledad. Serafina ha de haberlo compadecido* (J. Ibarguengoitia, Mexico, dialogue) 'Eventually the Captain must have complained about his solitude. Serafina must have taken pity on him'; Spain *debió de haberse quejado, debió de haberlo/le compadecido*.

As was mentioned earlier, the future tense is disappearing from spoken (but not written) Spanish, this process being more advanced in Latin America than in Spain and more deep-rooted in familiar or popular styles. It is usually replaced by the simple present – *Te llamo mañana* ‘I’ll call you tomorrow’ (see 14.6.4) – or by *ir a* + infinitive: *La voy a ver mañana* ‘I’m going to see her tomorrow’ (see 14.6.5).

14.6.1 Uses of the future tense form to denote future time

Sometimes, particularly in informal speech, the present and future forms are interchangeable. However, the future is used:

(a) for provisional or less certain statements about the future, or for statements about the future when no other word makes it clear that the future is meant:

Nos veremos mañana en Palacio para el premio al profesor Bernstein, ¿no es cierto?
(C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue)
Si llueve se aplazará el partido
Me ha dado diez mil pesetas. Con esto tiraré hasta la semana próxima, y luego veremos (luego vemos is impossible here)
En un remoto futuro el sol se apagará
Por la noche nos iremos al cine Juan y yo
(A. Buero Vallejo, dialogue, nos vamos possible)
Para entonces todos estaremos calvos

We’ll see one another tomorrow at the Palace for the prize-giving to Prof. Bernstein, won’t we?
If it rains the match will be postponed
He gave me 10,000 ptas. I’ll manage with that till next week, and then we’ll see
In the remote future the sun will go out
This evening Juan and I will go/are going to the cinema
We’ll all be bald by then (said of something that will take a long time)

Notes

(i) Nevertheless, the difference between sentences like *Te veo mañana* and *Te veré mañana* ‘I’ll see you tomorrow’ is slight. The former is informal and indicates something so firmly pre-arranged as to be felt to be a present reality. The latter is slightly less certain. Thus *Esta noche vamos al teatro* ‘Tonight we’re going to the theatre’ is usual, but if uttered in the morning, with the prospect of many other chores intervening, one might say *Esta noche, cuando lo tengamos todo hecho, iremos al teatro* ‘Tonight, when we’ve got everything done, we’ll going to the theatre’. However, in educated speech there is a great deal of overlap between the present and future, cf. *Te llamo a las seis* and *Te llamaré a las seis* ‘I’ll call you at six o’clock’ (almost indistinguishable).

(ii) After words meaning ‘perhaps’ the subjunctive is normally used, not the future. See 16.3.2.

(b) The future is used for promises, especially long-term ones, which by nature are not pre-arrangements:

Ten confianza en mí. No te decepcionaré
¡No pasarán!
Hoy eres la Cenicienta, pero mañana serás una princesa
Una verdadera revolución no admitirá jamás la impunidad (Vindicación de Cuba, Cuba)

Have confidence in me. I won’t disappoint you
They shall not pass!
Today you’re Cinderella, but tomorrow you’ll be a princess
A true revolution will never allow crimes to go unpunished

However, the present can be used (but not with *ser* ‘to be’) for short-term promises presented as pre-arrangements, e.g. *No te preocupes, te lo devuelvo mañana* ‘Don’t worry, I’ll give it back to you tomorrow’.

14.6.2 Future tense used for stern commands

The future is occasionally used for very solemn or very authoritarian commands, as in English:

<i>No matarás</i>	Thou shalt not kill
<i>No saldrás de esta casa hasta que yo no te lo permita</i>	You will not leave this house until I allow you to

14.6.3 Suppositional future

An important function of the future tense in ordinary Spanish, especially in Europe, is to express suppositions or approximations. This is apparently the first use of the future form learnt by Spanish children, who tend to acquire it as a pure future tense when they go to secondary school.⁷

Idiomatic use of the future in approximations often produces much more authentic Spanish than clumsy sentences involving *aproximadamente* or *alrededor de*.

In questions, the future expresses wonder, incredulity or conjecture:

<i>María tendrá unos veinte años</i>	Maria's about 20 years old
<i>Un par de años hará . . . Gannon me escribió de Gualeguaychu (J.L. Borges, Argentina)</i>	It must be a couple of years ago that Gannon wrote to me from Gualeguaychu
<i>Albert Hoffman descubrió el LSD hará 50 años (El País, Spain)</i>	Albert Hoffman discovered LSD about 50 years ago
<i>¡Habrás visto semejante tontería!</i>	Did anyone ever see such nonsense?!
<i>¿Qué será esto?</i>	I wonder what this is
<i>¿Qué hora será? (Lat. Am. ¿Qué horas serán?)</i>	I wonder what the time is
<i>—¿Dónde está tu monedero? —Me lo habré dejado en casa</i>	'Where's your purse?' 'I must have left it at home'
<i>¿Qué estará tramando ella?</i>	I wonder what she's up to

Kany, 190, notes that this use of the future is much more common in Spain than in Latin America, where *deber (de)* often replaces it: *deben de ser las cinco = serán las cinco* or *deben (de) ser las cinco*. See 21.3.2 for *deber de*.

In Mexico *haber de* is commonly used for *deber de* in this construction. See the footnote to 14.6 for an example.

14.6.4 Present tense with future meaning

The present is much used in informal language to refer to the immediate future. If the subject is human this conveys an idea of certainty and is therefore especially used for fixtures or appointments, cf. English 'I'm going to Spain next year', 'We attack tomorrow'. If the subject is inanimate, the action is foreseen as a certainty or fixture, e.g. *El tren sale mañana a las 7* 'The train's leaving tomorrow at 7' (scheduled departure).

The fact that the verb refers to the future is normally shown by some time phrase like *mañana, esta noche, el año que viene*:

<i>Vamos a España el año que viene</i>	We're going to Spain next year
<i>¿Quién paga mañana?</i>	Who's paying tomorrow?
<i>En seguida bajo</i>	I'll be down right away
<i>Te llamo esta noche</i>	I'll ring you tonight
<i>Dentro de un cuarto de hora estoy en tu casa (G. García Márquez, Colombia, dialogue)</i>	I'll be at your house in a quarter of an hour

⁷ Gili y Gaya (1972), 117ff, notes that Spanish children use the suppositional future from as early as their fourth year but often do not use the future form as a true future tense until much later.

Si viene por aquí, ¿qué digo?
Esta noche hay tormenta, verás
Nos vemos
Espera, lo hago en un momento

If he comes round here, what shall I say?
 Tonight there'll be a storm, you'll see
 Goodbye/See you again
 Wait, I'll do it in a moment

Notes

(i) This use of the present tense is particularly common with verbs of motion (*ir, venir, salir, llegar*). With other verbs it is best thought of as an informal alternative for the future tense, although there is often a difference of nuance.

(ii) Events in an unspecified future are by nature less certain, so the present tense should not be used: *Si las cosas continúan así, ya no habrá árboles* 'If things go on like this there will be no more trees left'.

(iii) If there is nothing in the context that clearly shows that the statement refers to the future, the present tense is assumed to be a true present and the future must be shown by some unambiguous form, e.g. *ir a* + infinitive or the future tense proper. Compare *Me parece que no hay sitio* 'I think there's no room' and *Me parece que no habrá/va a haber sitio* 'I think there won't be room'.

(iv) The present tense of *ser* is used for the future only for calendar statements: *Mañana es jueves* 'Tomorrow is Thursday', but *Mañana el discurso será pronunciado por el presidente* 'Tomorrow the speech will be delivered by the president'.

14.6.5 *Ir a* + infinitive

The future is very often expressed by *ir a* + infinitive. This form may express intention or it may simply be a colloquial substitute for the future tense (but only the future tense form can be used for the suppositional future mentioned at 14.6.3).

It is very commonly heard as a substitute for the future tense, to the extent that it virtually replaces the ordinary future tense form in the speech of many people, especially in Latin America:

Si te casas conmigo te voy a hacer feliz
 (intention, as opposed to promise,
 which would be *te haré* . . .)

If you marry me I'm going to make you
 happy

¡Deprisa, que van a cerrar! (expresses
 someone's intention; also *que cierran*
 'they're closing')

Hurry! They're going to close!

Si las cosas continúan así, no vamos a poder
respirar el aire de las ciudades (or, slightly
 more formally, *podremos* . . .)

If things go on like this we won't be able
 to breathe the air in the cities

Note

The imperfect *iba a*, etc. may also be used to form the future in the past. See 14.7.3.

14.7 The conditional: general

For the forms of the conditional see 13.1.8.

The name 'conditional' is apt only insofar as it describes one common use of the form, viz. the expression of the idea that an event is dependent on some other factor, as in *Podríamos ir mañana* 'We could go tomorrow (if the weather's nice, if we're free, etc.)'. But it has other functions that have nothing to do with the idea of conditionality, especially the expression of suppositions or approximations in the past (14.7.2) and the expression of the future in the past (14.7.3).

For the purpose of agreement, the conditional counts as a past tense, so the subjunctive in a subordinate clause governed by the conditional must also be

in the past. Compare *Es absurdo que vengas mañana* 'It's absurd for you to come tomorrow' and *Sería absurdo que vinieras/vinieses mañana* 'It would be absurd for you to come tomorrow'.

Colloquial language shows a marked tendency to replace the conditional by the imperfect, especially in conditional sentences (see 14.5.2 and 25.5 for discussion).

Replacement of the imperfect subjunctive by the conditional, e.g. *?si yo tendría dinero* for *si yo tuviera dinero* 'if I had some money' is very common in popular speech in Navarre and neighbouring regions, in Argentina and perhaps locally elsewhere, but foreigners should shun this tendency.

14.7.1 Uses of the conditional to express conditions

For the conditional in conditional sentences, see Chapter 25.

The conditional is also used for implied conditions, i.e. conditional statements in which the if-clause has been deleted:

<i>Sería una locura ponerlo en marcha sin aceite</i>	It would be crazy to start it up with no oil
<i>De nada serviría un nuevo golpe porque sólo perjudicaría al país</i> (headline, Bolivian press)	Another coup d'état would be pointless because it would only damage the country

14.7.2 Conditional for suppositions about the past

The conditional is used for suppositions and approximations about the past in the same way as the future is for the present (see 14.6.3):

<i>Aquel día andaríamos más de cincuenta kilómetros</i>	That day we must have walked more than 50 km
<i>Tendría (or Tenía/Debía de tener) unos treinta años</i>	He must have been about thirty
<i>Llevaba un saco sport que en algún tiempo habría sido azul marino</i> (E. Sábato, Argentina. Saco = americana or chaqueta in Spain)	He was wearing a sports jacket which must once have been navy blue

In some styles, especially journalism and more so in Latin America, the conditional is used for rumours or unsubstantiated reports. This construction is condemned by grammarians (and by the editors of *El País*) as a Gallicism:

<i>Gregorius habría nacido en Glasgow</i> (J. Cortázar, Argentina)	Gregorius was apparently born in Glasgow
<i>... la desaparición de los etarras estaría motivada por cuestiones de seguridad</i> (ABC, Spain)	... security reasons are said to be the motive for the disappearance of the ETA ⁸ members

14.7.3 Conditional for the future in the past

The conditional is used to express the future in the past (i.e. as a close equivalent of *iba a* + infinitive):

<i>Yo sabía que papá bajaría/bajaba/iba a bajar a las once</i>	I knew father would come down at 11 o'clock
<i>Dijo que lo haría/hacía/iba a hacer luego</i>	He said he'd do/was going to do it later

⁸ A terrorist organization dedicated to the independence of the Basque region.

Cerró la puerta con cuidado; su mujer dormía profundamente. Dormiría hasta que el sol hiciera su primera presencia en la ventana (I. Aldecoa, Spain)

He shut the door carefully; his wife was fast asleep. She would sleep until the sun first showed at the window

Entonces tuvo una aventura que se desarrollaría en tres etapas diferentes. En un rato todo el mundo se iría a dormir la siesta (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)

He then had an adventure that was to develop in three different stages. Soon everyone would go and take a siesta

14.7.4 Conditional in rhetorical questions

As in English, the conditional is much used for questions to which the speaker already knows the answer:

¿Alguien se atrevería a decir que la "socialización" ha hecho más libres a los diarios? (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)

Would anyone dare to say that 'socialization' has made newspapers more free?

14.7.5 Replacement of the conditional by the *-ra* form of the subjunctive

The *-ra* subjunctive form is a stylistic variant for the conditional when this is used as a true conditional (and not, for example, as a suppositional tense or future in the past).

This is normal in all styles with the auxiliary *haber*: *Habría sido mejor/Hubiera sido mejor* 'It would have been better'.

It is also common with *querer* and *deber*: *Yo querría/quisiera hacerlo* 'I'd like to do it'; *Deberías/Deberías haberlo hecho* 'You should have done it'.

With *poder* it is rather literary: *podría haber sido/pudiera haber sido*. See Chapter 21 for discussion of these modal verbs.

With other verbs it is nowadays uncommon and very poetic:

Abril, sin tu asistencia clara, fuera invierno de caídos esplendores . . . (Juan Ramón Jiménez, i.e. *sería* . . .)

April, without thy bright presence, would be a winter of fallen splendours

. . . un libro fuera poco . . . para dar cauce a un país como La Mancha (C.J. Cela, Spain)

A book would be little (lit. 'were little') to do justice to (lit. 'to give channel to') a land like La Mancha

It is used in formal styles in the Southern Cone in certain formulas, e.g. *pareciera que . . .* for *parecería que . . .* 'it would seem that . . .'

Note

Grammarians do not like the use of the *-se* subjunctive for the conditional: it is explicitly banned by the *Libro de estilo* of *El País*. But it is commonly heard in spontaneous speech: . . . *y hubiese* (for *hubiera/habría*) *sido muy sospechoso que yo me negase* (M. Puig, Argentina dialogue) 'and it would have been very suspicious if I'd refused'.

14.8 Compound tenses: general remarks

The compound tenses, e.g. the perfect, pluperfect, *pretérito anterior* and the perfect and pluperfect subjunctive forms, all use the auxiliary *haber* or, much less commonly and the *pretérito anterior* excepted, *tener*. No Spanish verbs form the perfect with *ser* 'to be' as an auxiliary (*llegar*, *ir*, *venir* are very rare archaic or journalistic exceptions, cf. *El verano es ido* 'Summer is gone').

Unlike French and Italian, the past participle is invariable and does not agree in number and gender with the object of the verb (unless *tener* is used instead of *haber*: see 14.8.3).

The participle may be deleted in English, but not in Spanish: "Have you tried the sausages?" "Yes, I have." — *¿Has probado las salchichas? — Sí* or *— Sí, las he probado*. However, deletion occasionally occurs with the pluperfect tense, to judge by *¿Se había reído? Sí, se había. Pero esta vez sin sarcasmo* (dialogue in M. Vargas Llosa, Peru) 'Had he laughed? Yes, he had. But without sarcasm this time.' Spanish informants thought that this might be a sporadic feature of informal speech.

14.8.1 Compound tenses: word order

Learners should respect the rule that no words may come between the auxiliary and the participle, cf. French *j'ai toujours dit = siempre he dicho*. *?Yo he siempre dicho* is not heard in normal Spanish.

However this rule is occasionally broken in literary style with such words as *ni siquiera, incluso, todavía, aún, ya, nunca, jamás, más que, quizá(s), tal vez*:

<i>Se habrá tal vez olvidado</i>	You may have forgotten
<i>Se ha más que duplicado la cifra</i> (From <i>Hoja del lunes</i>)	The figure has more than doubled
<i>. . . en buena parte por no habérselo aún propuesto con entera seriedad</i> (S. Pitól, Mexico)	. . . to a great extent because he hadn't yet suggested it to him in all seriousness

14.8.2 Suppression of haber in compound tenses

The auxiliary may optionally be suppressed to avoid repetition:

<i>No sólo había tocado la mano y mirado los ojos de la mujer que más le gustaba tocar y mirar del mundo</i> (C. Fuentes, Mexico)	Not only had he touched the hand and looked at the eyes of the woman he most liked to touch and look at in the world
<i>. . . yo también he pasado por baches y conocido la duda</i> (L. Goytisoló, Spain, dialogue)	I've been through rough patches as well and known doubt

14.8.3 Tengo hecho, tengo comprado, etc.

Tener is occasionally used as an auxiliary, like the English 'to have got', to denote the successful acquisition of some object or the fulfilment of some task: compare 'I've painted the windows' and 'I've got all the windows painted' or 'I've done my homework' and 'I've got all my homework done'.

The participle must agree in number and gender with the object of the verb. The verb must also be transitive and must have a direct object (**tengo sido*, cf. Portuguese *tenho sido* 'I have been' is not Spanish):

<i>Ya tengo compradas las entradas</i>	I've already bought the tickets
<i>Después de las vacaciones tendré hechos todos mis deberes</i>	After the holidays/vacation I'll have all my homework done
<i>Yo tenía concertada hora con el jefe</i>	I had arranged an appointment with the boss
<i>. . . ese jueves de diciembre tenía pensado cruzar a la orilla derecha</i> (J. Cortázar, Argentina, dialogue)	. . . That Thursday in December I had planned to cross to the right bank

Note

Llevar is occasionally also used in the same way for accumulative actions: *Llevo tomadas tres aspirinas, pero todavía me duele la cabeza* 'I've taken three aspirins, but my head still aches', *Yo llevo vendidos cuatrocientos* (Mexico City, overheard) 'I've sold four hundred'.

14.9 Perfect tense

Spanish differs from French, German and Italian, and broadly resembles English in that the difference in meaning between the preterite – *hablé* ‘I spoke’ – and the perfect – *he hablado* ‘I’ve spoken’ – is maintained in both written and spoken language.

Students of languages in which the distinction is blurred or lost must avoid translating sentences like *Je l’ai vu hier*, *Ich habe ihn gestern gesehen*, *L’ho visto ieri* ‘I saw him yesterday’ as **Le/Lo he visto ayer* (correctly *Le/Lo vi ayer*). Such misuse of the perfect is sometimes heard in popular Madrid speech.

European Spanish usually uses the perfect wherever English does, but the converse is not true: the perfect is often used in Spain where English requires a simple past tense. Moreover, in the majority of the Spanish-speaking world (Galicia, Asturias and most of Latin America) the preterite is in fact much more common than the perfect, cf. *No vino todavía* (Latin America) ‘He didn’t come yet’ and *No ha venido todavía* (Spain), ‘He hasn’t come yet’.⁹ See 14.9.7 for further remarks on the perfect tense in Latin America.

14.9.1 Perfect to denote events occurring in time that includes the present

The perfect is used for events that have happened in a period of time that includes the present, e.g. today, this afternoon, this week, this month, this year, this century, always, already, never, still, yet. In this respect, English – especially British English – and European Spanish coincide:

*No he visto a tu madre esta semana
En sólo dos generaciones se ha desertizado
un 43% de la superficie terrestre* (advert in ABC)

*Hemos ido dos veces este mes
Ya han llegado
Siempre he pensado que . . .
Aún/Todavía no han llegado*

I haven’t seen your mother this week
In only two generations 43% of the
earth’s surface has been reduced to
desert

We’ve been twice this month
They’ve already arrived
I have always thought that . . .
They haven’t arrived yet

Notes

(i) The preterite may be used with the effect of severing the link between the event and the present moment. Compare *Vi a tu suegra esta mañana* and *He visto a tu suegra esta mañana* ‘I saw/have seen your mother-in-law this morning’.

(ii) Words like *siempre* and *nunca* may or may not include the present: compare *Yo siempre he sido un problema para mis padres* ‘I’ve always been a problem for my parents (and still am)’ and *Yo siempre fui un problema para mis padres* ‘I always was a problem for my parents’ (e.g. when I was young). But some speakers do not systematically respect the difference of meaning in either language.

(iii) For the Latin-American (and Canary Islands) use of the preterite in the above contexts see 14.9.7.

14.9.2 Perfect for events whose effects are still relevant in the present

The perfect is used for past events that are relevant to the present or whose effects still bear on the present. In this respect European Spanish and English coincide:

⁹ North-American English resembles Latin-American Spanish in this respect, so readers from the United States will often prefer an English simple past tense to the compound tenses used in the translations in section 14.9.

<i>Alguien ha fumado un cigarrillo aquí. Huelo el humo</i>	Someone's smoked a cigarette here. I can smell the smoke
<i>¿Quién ha roto esta ventana?</i>	Who's broken this window?
<i>Pero aunque es evidente que Simone de Beauvoir ha leído con detenimiento a estos autores y aprovechado sus técnicas . . . (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)</i>	But although it is obvious that Simone de Beauvoir has read these authors closely and (has) taken advantage of their techniques . . .

Note

This use of the perfect is also quite common in literary Latin-American styles, but everyday Latin-American speech in most regions favours the preterite for any completed event. See 14.9.7.

14.9.3 Perfect of recency

In Spain, but not in Latin America, the perfect may optionally be used for any very recent event, in practice any event that has happened since midnight. Very recent events (e.g. seconds ago) are almost always expressed by the perfect tenses:

<i>Esta mañana me he levantado/me levanté a las seis</i>	I got up at six this morning
<i>¿Has oído la explosión?</i>	Did you hear the explosion?
<i>—¿Quién ha dicho eso? —No he sido yo.</i>	'Who said that (just now)?' 'It wasn't me.
<i>Ha sido él</i>	It was him'
<i>La he visto hace un momento</i>	I saw her a moment ago
<i>No he podido hacerlo</i>	I couldn't do it
<i>No he querido venir antes por no querer molestar</i>	I didn't want to come earlier so as not to cause bother
<i>Ha muerto Franco (headline)</i>	Franco is dead

Notes

(i) The perfect of recency is confined to standard European Spanish, although Kany, 200, reports its colloquial use in Bolivia and Perú. Other Latin-American regions favour the preterite in these examples, but for speakers of standard European Spanish *La vi hace un momento* sounds wrong because the event is very recent.

(ii) The above examples are chosen to show how European Spanish freely uses the perfect of recency with verbs like *querer*, *ser*, where English allows only the simple past: *No he querido hacerlo* 'I didn't want to do it', *¿Quién ha sido el gracioso que se ha llevado las llaves?* 'Who's the clown who took the keys away with him (just now)?'.

(iii) European Spanish thus differs from English in that the perfect is used of any very recent event, completed or not. English allows 'Have you heard the news?' since the news can still be heard, but not *'Have you heard that explosion?'. Cf. *¿Habéis visto el relámpago?* 'Did you see the flash?'.

(iv) One occasionally finds the perfect used in European Spanish in conjunction with some word or phrase that refers to a past not continuing into the present, e.g. 'yesterday', 'two months ago'. However, unless the event happened in the course of the present day, the preterite is safer. Some native speakers of European Spanish strongly preferred the preterite in the following sentences:

<i>Ayer, a la caída de la tarde, cuando el gran acantilado es de cinabrio, he vuelto a la isla (I. Aldecoa, Spain)</i>	Yesterday, at nightfall, when the big cliff is the colour of cinnabar, I returned to the island
<i>Se trata de un ejercicio que ha perdido la iniciativa hace meses (Cambio16, Spain)</i>	It involves an exercise which lost its initiative months ago
<i>A mí todo lo que me ha sucedido me ha sucedido ayer, anoche a más tardar (J. Cortázar, Argentina, dialogue)</i>	Everything that has happened to me happened yesterday, last night at the latest

Hace pocos días, un pacifista danés ha sido acusado de espionaje a favor de Moscú (La Vanguardia, Spain) A few days ago a Danish pacifist was accused of spying for Moscow

(v) Frequent use of the perfect for the preterite is said to be typical of uneducated Madrid speech: *Bueno, he ido a hacerme el análisis hace quince días y mañana o pasado me dan los resultados* (interview in *Cambio16*, Spain) 'Well, I went and got a test done two weeks ago and tomorrow or the day after they'll give me the results'.

14.9.4 Perfect in time phrases

The perfect is often used, especially in Spain, in negative time phrases of the sort:

Hace años que no te he visto (or *no te veo*;
Latin Americans may not accept the perfect) I haven't seen you for years

Positive sentences of this type usually require the present tense: *Hace años que le llo veo todos los días* 'I've been seeing him every day for years'.

Choice of tenses in statements of this kind is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 32 (Time expressions).

14.9.5 Use of the perfect for quotations

The perfect is sometimes used for famous quotations, e.g. *Aristóteles ha dicho que . . .* 'Aristotles said . . .', though Carnicer, (1972), 176, questions this usage. The present, preterite or imperfect is safer.

14.9.6 Perfect used for future certainties

The perfect is occasionally used in familiar European Spanish, at least in Central Spain, for future actions that are described as certainties:

Cuando vuelvas ya he acabado/ya lo habré acabado (Lat. Am. *ya acabé*) I'll have finished by the time you come back

14.9.7 The perfect tense in Latin America

In Latin America all completed actions tend to be expressed by the preterite tense, more so in some regions than others. This solution is so favoured in informal styles in some regions that the perfect tense is rarely heard:

<i>¿Todavía no llegó tu padre?</i>	Hasn't your father come yet?/(US) 'Didn't your father come yet?'
<i>Aún no salieron del cine</i>	They haven't come out of the cinema yet
<i>¿Qué hubo?</i> (Colombia, Venezuela, etc.;	How're things?
Spain <i>¿Qué hay?</i>)	
<i>Ya nos llegó la moderna solución</i> (advert in	Now we've got the modern answer!
<i>El Tiempo</i> , Colombia)	
— <i>¿Ya organizaste?</i> — <i>le pregunté.</i>	'Have you organized it?', I asked him.
— <i>Sí, ya organicé</i> (A. Mastretta, Mexico,	'Yes, I've organized it'
dialogue; Spain <i>has organizado, he</i>	
<i>organizado</i>)	
<i>¿Nunca te fijaste en eso?</i> (ibid., Spain <i>te has</i>	Haven't you ever/Didn't you ever notice
<i>fijado</i>)	that?

This use of the preterite is especially typical of spoken language in much of the Southern Cone: the perfect tense is a rarity in everyday speech in Buenos Aires and is said to sound bookish if used in familiar speech.

However, this colloquial usage varies from one region to another. In the spoken language of Bolivia and Peru the perfect is more frequent and its use seems to correspond quite closely to standard European usage. Kany, 201, notes that in popular Bolivian and Peruvian speech one even hears constructions like *?He tenido un mal sueño anoche* 'I had a bad dream last night' where all other regions, including Spain, require the preterite.¹⁰

Mexican Spanish (and possibly the Spanish of other parts of Latin America) differs from European in that the perfect is not used to indicate a past action that is still relevant to the present, as in the European sentence *Alguien ha fumado un cigarrillo aquí* 'Someone's smoked a cigarette here (I can still smell the smoke)', but an action that is *continuing* in the present or the future: Mexican *He fumado mucho* = 'I **have been** smoking a lot and still am smoking'.

The perfect of recency, frequent in Spain, is not used in Mexico or in most of Latin America: *Ha llegado hace un momento* for *Llegó hace un momento* is not normal in everyday speech.

Lope Blanch¹¹ remarks that the perfect may occasionally replace the preterite in exclamations, in which case it is strongly emphatic: compare *Esta mañana llovió mucho* 'It rained a lot this morning' and *¡Esta mañana ha llovido mucho!* 'Did it rain a lot this morning!'.

The tendency to use the perfect with a present meaning is taken to extremes further south in Latin America. Kany, 205ff, notes that in colloquial Ecuadorian and southern Colombian the perfect is used, even in educated speech, as an equivalent to the present tense: *?Ya ha sido tarde* = *Ya es tarde* 'It's late', *?Piernas gordas ha tenido la Laura* (i.e. *tiene*) 'Laura's got fat legs'. Occasionally it may even be used as a future: *?El año que viene ha sido* (i.e. *será*) *bisiesto* 'Next year will be a leap year'. Kany further notes that, south from Ecuador, and especially in Argentina, even the pluperfect of *ser* is locally heard in popular speech with a present meaning: *?había sido tarde* = *es tarde*. However, these forms are very aberrant with respect to normal usage elsewhere.

As was mentioned earlier, the Latin-American preference for the preterite to indicate all past completed actions has its counterpart in North-American English. Compare US 'Did you sell your apartment yet?', 'Did they arrive already?' and British 'Have you sold your flat yet?', 'Have they arrived already?'.

14.10 The pluperfect: general

The pluperfect is formed with the imperfect of *haber* plus a past participle: *habías comido* 'you had eaten', *habían llegado* 'they/you had arrived'.

The *-ra* form of the verb can also sometimes have an indicative pluperfect meaning in literary Spanish. See 14.10.2.

¹⁰ But note European *Anoche dormí mal* 'I slept badly last night' and *Esta noche he dormido mal*, same meaning.

¹¹ 'Sobre el uso del pretérito en el español de México', in Lope Blanch (1991), 131-43.

14.10.1 Uses of the pluperfect

The use of the Spanish pluperfect corresponds quite closely to the English pluperfect: it is used for events or states that preceded some past event and are felt to be relevant to it:

*Yo ya me había dado cuenta de que ustedes
no estaban
Sabíamos que ya había vendido el coche*

I had already realized that you weren't
there
We knew that he had already sold the
car

Notes

(i) Colloquially the pluperfect may be avoided, especially in Latin-American Spanish, where it is commonly replaced by the preterite or, when it refers to habitual actions, by the imperfect: *Lo encontré donde lo dejé* (for *donde lo había dejado*) (from J.M. Lope Blanch, 1991, 152) 'I found it where I'd left it/where I left it', *Cuando terminábamos* (for *habíamos terminado*) *volvíamos a casa* (habitual) 'When we had finished, we used to return home', *Le faltaban dos dientes y nunca se puso* (Spain *se había puesto/se ponía*) *a dieta ni fue* (Spain *había idoliba*) *a la gimnasia* (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue) 'He had two teeth missing and he had never been on a diet or gone to the gymnasium'.

(ii) In some cases the English pluperfect will require translation by the preterite. See 14.10.4 note (i).

English occasionally uses a simple past where a Spanish pluperfect is required: 'I didn't imagine ahead to parties . . . or nights alone in the double bed after a divorce which left me stranded' (Mary Ingram, *Now we are thirty*) *No podía imaginarme el futuro, fiestas . . . noches sola en la cama matrimonial después de un divorcio que me había dejado abandonada sin saber qué hacer.*

14.10.2 Pluperfect ending in -ra

The *-ra* form of Spanish verbs descends from the Latin indicative pluperfect: Latin *fuera* 'I had been' > Spanish *fuera*. The Spanish form gradually acquired a subjunctive meaning and for most purposes it is now identical in use to the *-se* imperfect subjunctive (see 16.2.3 for further details).

The old indicative pluperfect use of the *-ra* forms survives in literary Spanish and is found in literature and journalism as a supposedly elegant alternative for the ordinary pluperfect using *había*. This is very common in Latin America, but it is also found in Spain among those who think of themselves as stylists. Lorenzo (1980), 135, echoes a typical European attitude to this construction: *Evidentemente, la sentimos como afectada, pero hay muchas gentes que lo son. . . .*

When used thus, the *-ra* form has no subjunctive meaning at all. However, this construction seems to have been contaminated by a feature of the subjunctive: it only occurs in subordinate, chiefly relative clauses. *El libro que había leído* 'the book he had read' can be re-cast in supposedly 'elegant' style as *el libro que leyera*, but *Había leído el libro* 'He had read the book' cannot be rewritten **Leyera el libro*.

Examples:

*Fue el único rastro que dejó en el que
fuera su hogar de casada por cinco horas*
(G. García Márquez, Colombia; for *había
sido*)

It was the only trace she left in what had
been her marital home for five hours

*Y en la propia Nicaragua, la dinastía
de Somoza, que fuera directamente
colocada en el poder por Estados Unidos . . .*
(M. Benedetti in *El País*; *había sido* . . .)

And in Nicaragua itself, the Somoza
dynasty, which had been directly
installed in power by the United
States . . .

Note

One even finds examples of the imperfect subjunctive in *-se* used as an indicative pluperfect in the same contexts as the *-ra* form described above: *Así había dado con el hombre capaz, muy versado en asuntos económicos, que conociese en la Logia* (A. Carpentier, Cuba; for *había conocido* or *conociera*) 'He had thus come across the able man, well versed in economic matters, whom he had met in the (Masonic) Lodge'. But this is very rare on both continents and rather forced.

14.10.3 -ra and -se pluperfect after después de que and desde que

The rule for the choice of verb form after *después de que* 'after' and *desde que* 'since' should logically be subjunctive for as yet unfulfilled events, indicative for fulfilled events, i.e. *Comeremos después de que lleguen los demás* 'We'll eat after the rest arrive' (unfulfilled), *Decidimos comer después de que llegasen/llegaran los demás* 'We decided we would eat after the rest arrived' (unfulfilled: they hadn't arrived yet), *Comimos después de que llegaron los demás* 'We ate after the rest (had) arrived' (fulfilled):

. . . <i>después de que las hijas mayores la ayudaron a poner un poco de orden en los estragos de la boda</i> (G. García Márquez, Colombia)	after the elder daughters (had) helped her to put a bit of order in the devastation left by the wedding
. . . <i>después de que Victoriano Huerta mató a Madero</i> (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)	after Victoriano Huerta killed Madero

However, written and formal spoken language, especially in Spain, and for no very obvious reason, frequently uses the *-ra* or *-se* forms even for fulfilled events in the past:

. . . <i>después de que Nigeria hiciese pública su decisión de firmar el acta</i> (El País)	after Nigeria made public its decision to sign the communiqué/minutes
. . . <i>dos años después de que Batista tomara el poder</i> (Cambio16, Spain)	two years after Batista took power
. . . <i>desde que entrara en prisión, el 23 de agosto</i> (Cambio16, Spain)	since he entered prison on August 23
<i>Vargas Llosa, que conserva muchos amigos en Barcelona desde que residiera en España</i> (ABC, Spain)	Vargas Llosa, who has kept many friends in Barcelona from when he lived in Spain

If the subject of both verbs is the same, *después de que* is replaced by *después de + infinitive*: *Nos fuimos después de haber hecho todo* 'We left after we had done everything'. Even if the subjects are different, colloquial language may still use the infinitive construction, e.g. *?después de llegar Pepe* for *después de que llegó Pepe* 'after Pepe arrived', but learners should probably avoid this. See 18.3 and 16.2.6 for discussion of the infinitive after subordinators.

14.10.4 Pretérito anterior: hube hablado, hube acabado

This tense, called the *pretérito anterior*, is a perfective pluperfect and expresses an event completed just before a following past event. It is normally confined to literature and it is now extremely rare in speech:

<i>Cuando hubieron terminado de reírse, examinaron mi situación personal</i> (A. Cancela, quoted <i>Esbozo</i> , 3.14.7)	When they'd finished laughing they examined my personal situation
<i>Se marchó apenas hubo comido</i>	He left as soon as he had eaten
<i>Le escribió el mismo día, no bien se hubo marchado</i> (L. Goytisolo, Spain)	He wrote to her the same day, when she had only just left

. . . *así que, una vez que me hube quitado la blusa* . . . (E. Sábato, Argentina, dialogue)

So as soon as I had taken my blouse off . . .

Notes

(i) This tense is only used after *después (de) que* 'after', *luego que, así que, no bien, enseguida que, en cuanto, tan pronto como* and *apenas*, all translatable as 'as soon as', and after *cuando* and other phrases, to emphasize that the event was completed just before the main event in the sentence. In ordinary language it is replaced by the preterite: *cuando terminaron de reírse* 'when they'd stopped laughing', *Tan pronto como llegamos, pasamos al comedor* 'As soon as we arrived, we went through to the dining room', *Pero apenas entró cambió de opinión* (J. Ibarguengoitia, Mexico, dialogue) 'But he'd hardly entered when he changed his mind' – or, less commonly, by the pluperfect¹²: *Apenas había ordenado el señor juez el levantamiento del cadáver para llevarlo al depósito judicial, rompieron el silencio unos gritos de mujer* (F. García Pavón, Spain) 'The judge had scarcely ordered the removal of the body to the official morgue when the silence was broken by women shouting'.

(ii) The *pretérito anterior* refers to a single completed event. After the same time phrases, repeated or habitual events are expressed by the ordinary pluperfect: *En cuanto habíamos terminado el trabajo, volvíamos a casa* 'As soon as we had finished work, we used to return home' – or, colloquially, by the imperfect: *En cuanto terminábamos el trabajo, volvíamos a casa*.

¹² Replacement by the pluperfect is uncommon. Busquets & Bonzi (1983), 69, 267, give numerous examples of the pluperfect as alternatives to the preterite.

15

Continuous forms of the verb

15.1 General

15.1.1 Forms and equivalents of the continuous

Spanish has a full range of continuous verb forms constructed with the appropriate tense of *estar* 'to be' and the gerund: *estoy hablando* 'I'm talking', *estuve cenando* 'I had dinner/supper', *estaremos escribiendo* 'we'll be writing', etc. The formation of the gerund is discussed at 20.2.

French has a close equivalent of the Spanish continuous: *Je suis en train de parler* 'I'm (in the middle of) speaking' stresses an ongoing action in much the same way as *estoy hablando*. Students of Spanish who know French well should recall that if *en train de . . .* is impossible in French, the continuous will usually be impossible in Spanish. *Je pars demain = salgo mañana*. **Je suis en train de partir demain*/**Estoy saliendo mañana* are both impossible for 'I'm leaving tomorrow'.

The Italian continuous, *sto lavorando = estoy trabajando* 'I'm working' appears only in the present and imperfect tenses, whereas its Spanish counterpart can appear in any tense.¹

The Spanish continuous form is apparently more common than fifty years ago and some of its current uses seem to reflect the influence of English, cf. this extract from a commercial circular from Spain: *Su dirección nos ha sido facilitada por nuestra Embajada en su país y nos estamos permitiendo distraer un instante su atención para poner nuestros servicios a su disposición . . .* where *nos permitimos distraer . . .* seems more plausible. The Academy's *Esbozo*, 3.12.5, complains bitterly about this abuse of the continuous.

English-speaking learners constantly over-use the continuous and produce sentences like **En este capítulo el autor está diciendo que . . .* 'In this chapter the author is saying that . . .' instead of the correct *dice que . . .*. These errors usually arise from a failure to apply the rule that the continuous refers only to actions that are really in progress. In this case the author is obviously not actually saying the words *now*.

Continuous forms seem to be more frequent in Latin-American Spanish than in European. See 15.5 for discussion.

15.1.2 The Spanish continuous and the English progressive compared

Spanish continuous forms, e.g. *Estoy leyendo*, *Estaban hablando* etc., misleadingly resemble the much-used English progressive verb form, e.g. 'I'm

¹ A. & G. Lepschy (1988), 148.

reading', 'they were talking'. Although the two sometimes correspond closely when the English forms are used as present tenses, the Spanish continuous differs from its English analogue in several important respects:

(a) It can only refer to an action that is actually in progress, whereas the English progressive doubles as a future tense and also, sometimes, as a habitual form:

<i>Estoy comiendo</i>	I'm (actually) eating
<i>Estaré durmiendo</i>	I'll be sleeping/asleep (at that time)
<i>Estabas hablando</i>	You were (in the process of) talking

but

<i>Llegamos mañana</i>	We're arriving tomorrow (future)
<i>Si te pones así, me voy</i>	If you get like that, I'm going (future)
<i>Mi hijo va a un colegio mixto</i>	My son is going to a mixed (i.e. co-educational) school (habitual)
<i>Te envío ésta para decirte que . . .</i>	I'm sending you this to tell you that . . . (either really means 'I have sent' or 'I shall send')
<i>Yo salía a la mañana siguiente para París</i>	I was leaving the following morning for Paris (future in the past)
<i>Hoy el Barça juega en casa</i>	Today Barcelona is/are playing at home (<i>está jugando</i> possible only if the game is in progress)

(b) The Spanish continuous is very rarely used with verbs of motion (see 15.3):

<i>¿Adónde vas?</i>	Where are you going ?
<i>Ya voy</i>	I'm coming ²

(c) The Spanish continuous adds a nuance to, but does not substantially alter the meaning of the non-continuous verb form, so that the two forms are sometimes virtually interchangeable. This should be clear in the following pairs of examples:

<i>¿No hueles que se queman/se están quemando las salchichas?</i>	Can't you smell that the sausages are burning?
<i>Yo hablaba/estaba hablando con Mario</i>	I was talking to Mario/I used to talk to Mario
<i>Ana lee/está leyendo</i>	Ana is reading

(d) A number of common Spanish verbs do not appear in the continuous form, whereas their English counterparts do. See 15.3 for discussion.

15.1.3 Further remarks on the relationship between the simple present tense and the present continuous

The Spanish present tense, e.g. *escribo*, *hago*, etc., is imprecise in terms of time: it may indicate present, future or habitual events, eternal truths or even past events (see 14.3 and 14.6.4). Continuous forms are much more

² In Spanish 'to go' must be used when referring to the departure point and 'to come' when referring to the arrival point; English is vague in this respect. Thus *No voy a tu fiesta esta noche* = 'I'm not coming/going to your party tonight', but not **No vengo a tu fiesta . . .*. —*¿Vienes conmigo?* —*No, no voy contigo* ' "Are you coming with me?" "No, I'm not coming/going with you" '.

specifically present: compare *Fuma* 'He smokes' or 'He's smoking' and *Está fumando* 'He's (actually) smoking (now)'.

An action must be perceived to be actually in progress for the continuous to be possible. Peninsular informants³ said *está lloviendo* on seeing rain through a window, and thought that *llueve*, in this case, sounded vaguely poetic or archaic. But most avoided the continuous in the sentences *Asómate a ver si llueve* 'Look out and see if it's raining' and *¿Llueve o no llueve?* 'Is it raining or not?', the reason being that someone who asks whether it is raining has obviously not actually heard or seen rain falling. If the questioner had heard the patter of rain, *¿Está lloviendo?* would be more appropriate since the phenomenon is known to be occurring.

Similarly, when someone up a tree shouts 'I'm falling!', (s)he literally means 'I'm going to fall!', not 'I'm already in mid-air!': a Spanish speaker shouts *¡Que me caigo!*

With some verbs (e.g. *leer* 'to read', *charlar* 'to chat'), or where the duration of an action is emphasized, the continuous is more appropriate than the simple form: *Estuve leyendo toda la mañana* is better Spanish than *Leí toda la mañana* 'I was reading all morning'/'I read all morning' (example and argument from Moliner, II, 1393).

15.2 Uses of the continuous forms

15.2.1 Continuous used to emphasize events in progress

The continuous is frequently used to show that an event is, was or will actually be in progress at the time. In cases in which the action is emphatically in progress at the time, the continuous is obligatory:

<i>Ahora no se puede poner – está haciendo sus cuentas</i> (not . . . <i>hace sus cuentas</i>)	He can't come to the phone now, he's doing his accounts
<i>¿Me estarán viendo/Me ven desde esa ventana?</i>	Are they watching me from that window?
<i>Arriba golpearon dos veces, sin mucha fuerza. —Está matando las cucarachas —propuso Gregorius</i> (J. Cortázar, Argentina, dialogue)	There were two knocks from upstairs, not very loud. 'He's killing the cockroaches', Gregorius suggested
<i>Pero ¡si te estaba escuchando!/¡si te escuchaba!</i>	But I <i>was</i> listening to you!

Notes

(i) In the case of the imperfect tense, the continuous and non-continuous are sometimes interchangeable if they really refer to the past, i.e. *pensaba* and *estaba pensando* both mean 'I/he was thinking'. See 14.5.3 for discussion.

(ii) The preterite continuous is different in meaning from the non-continuous preterite. *Hablé con él* means 'I spoke to him', *Estuve hablando con él* means 'I talked to him for a time', i.e. 'I had a talk with him'. See 15.2.3.

15.2.2 Continuous used to denote temporary or surprising events

(a) The continuous may be used to show that an action is temporary or in some way unusual:

³ In this and several other cases, Latin-American informants tended to use the continuous more readily than Peninsular informants.

*Vive en París, pero últimamente está
viviendo en Madrid
¿Dónde estás trabajando estos días?
Me estoy sintiendo mal/me siento mal*

He lives in Paris, but at the moment he's
living in Madrid
Where are you working these days?
I'm (suddenly) feeling ill

(b) The continuous may express surprise, indignation or lively interest:

*Pero ¿qué estás haciendo?
¿Qué me estás contando?
—¿En qué estábamos pensando tú y yo
cuando engendramos a estos seres, me quieres
explicar? —le pregunta la madre al padre
(Carmen Rico-Godoy, Spain, dialogue)*

But what *are* you doing?
What *are* you telling me!?
'Do you mind explaining to me what
you and I were thinking of when we
conceived these creatures?', the mother
asks the father

15.2.3 Continuous used to denote prolonged events

The continuous may show that an action is prolonged over a period of time:

*He estado pensando que tú no siempre dices
la verdad
Pero, ¿vas a estar esperándola todo el día?*

I've been thinking that you don't always
tell the truth
But are you going to keep on waiting for
her all day?!

*El rostro de María sonreía. Es decir, ya
no sonreía, pero había estado sonriendo
un décimo de segundo antes (E. Sábato,
Argentina)
Acuérdense, el señor ese con el que estuvimos
tomando nieves en el zócalo de Atlixco
(A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue; nieves
= helados in Spain)*

Maria's face was smiling. I mean, it
wasn't smiling now, but it had been
smiling a tenth of a second before

Remember, that gentleman we had an
ice-cream with in the main square in
Atlixco

Note

The preterite continuous, *estuve hablando/comiendo* 'I was speaking/eating for a time' indicates an action that was prolonged in the past but finished, unlike the imperfect forms *hablaba/estaba hablando* which merely indicate that an action was going on at the time.

The preterite continuous is really only possible with verbs that refer to drawn-out actions, e.g. 'think', 'talk', 'read', 'wait', 'eat', etc.. Verbs that refer to instantaneous actions cannot be extended: **Estuvo rompiendo una ventana* 'He was breaking a window (for a certain time)' is not possible, and *Estaba rompiendo una ventana* is only possible if we mean 'He was (in the process of) breaking a window'.

Instantaneous actions can, however, be repeated over a period of time: *Estuvo disparando al aire durante tres minutos* 'He spent three minutes firing into the air'.

15.2.4 Continuous to express repeated events

The continuous may express the idea that an event is or has been constantly recurring.

*Está yendo mucho al cine estos días
La estás viendo demasiado, hijo
Está viniendo a casa mucho estos días
Lleva años que se está yendo pero nunca
acaba de irse
Está haciendo frío*

He's going to the cinema a lot these days
You're seeing too much of her, son
He comes to the house a lot these days
He's been leaving for years but never
gets round to going
It's been cold lately/The weather's cold
at the moment

*Pero está usted tomando muy seguido esas
hierbas y seguido hacen daño (A. Mastretta,
Mexico, dialogue)*

But you're taking those herbs over long
periods, and they cause harm when
taken over long periods

Venir and *ir* may appear in the continuous form in this sense, but not usually in other contexts.

15.2.5 Future continuous

The future continuous is used either (a) to describe events felt already to be happening in the present, or (b) to conjecture about what may actually be happening now:

*Mañana a estas horas estaremos volando
sobre el Pacífico
Estarán comiendo a estas horas*

Tomorrow at this time we'll be flying
over the Pacific
They'll probably be eating at this time of
day

15.3 Restrictions on the use of the continuous

(a) Continuous forms are not normally used with certain verbs that refer to inner mental activities, e.g. *aborrecer* 'to loathe', *amar* 'to love', *odiar* 'to hate', *saber* 'to know'. In this respect Spanish and English coincide, but some verbs which denote inner states or 'invisible' actions may appear in the continuous in Spanish but not in English:

*Me estoy creyendo todo lo que dices
Estoy viendo que vamos a acabar mal
Te estás mereciendo una bofetada
Estoy temiendo que va a llegar tarde*

?I'm believing everything you say
I can see we're going to end badly
You deserve (i.e. 'are asking for') a slap
I'm afraid he's going to arrive late

Note

Doler 'to hurt' may appear in either form, much as in English: *Me duele/Me está doliendo la barriga* 'My stomach (i.e. intestines) aches/is aching'.

(b) The continuous is not used to describe states rather than actions (English often allows the progressive form for states):

*Tres arañas de luces colgaban del techo
Lo que falta es . . .
La luna brillaba sobre las olas
Parece cansada
¡Qué bien huele la madreselva hoy!*

Three chandeliers were hanging from the
roof
What's lacking is . . .
The moon was shining on the waves
She's looking tired
Isn't the honeysuckle smelling good
today!

(c) The continuous is not used with *estar* (**estar estando* is not Spanish), *poder*, *haber* or, usually, with *ir*, *venir*, *regresar*, *volver*, *andar*, except in the frequentative sense (discussed at 15.2.4):

*¿Adónde vas?
Viene ahora
Cuando volvíamos del cine (me) subí un
momento a ver a la abuela*

Where are you going?
He's coming now
When we were coming back from the
cinema I went up to see grandmother for
a moment
You're being stupid today

Notes

(i) Finite forms of verbs that describe physical posture or position can refer only to an action, not to a state. English speakers are often misled by forms like 'He was sitting down' which almost always means *Estaba sentado* 'He was seated'. *Estaba sentándose* = 'He was in the process of sitting down'. Further examples: *Estaban tumbados* 'They were lying down', *Estaba agachado* 'He was bending down' (compare *Estaba agachándose* 'He was in the process of bending down').

(ii) *Tener* 'to have' is not used in the continuous, except in the frequentative sense

described earlier: *Me dijo que estaba teniendo problemas con su vecino* 'He told me he was having problems with his neighbour'.

(iii) *Llevar* is used in the continuous only with the sense of 'to carry': *Lleva camisa* 'He's wearing a shirt', *Está llevando una camisa a su madre* 'He's taking a shirt to his mother'.

(iv) *Parecer* 'to seem' occasionally appears in the continuous: *La situación me está pareciendo cada vez más fea* 'The situation's looking uglier and uglier to me'.

(v) The continuous of *ir*, *venir* and, regionally, of some other of these verbs is found in colloquial speech in parts of Latin America. See 15.5 for Latin-American usage.

15.4 Continuous forms of *ser*

Some grammarians frown on continuous forms of *ser*, e.g. *está siendo*, as Anglicisms, but they are not uncommon, especially in Latin America, and they occur in speech as well as in writing to judge by the dialogue of some novels. It seems unreasonable to deny the language the nuance supplied by a continuous form of *ser*, e.g.:

Por un instante pensó que de algún modo él, Martín, estaba de verdad siendo necesario a aquel ser atormentado (E. Sábato, Argentina)

La convocatoria a las distintas manifestaciones está siendo variada (La Vanguardia, Spain)

Yo no estoy siendo juzgado (C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue)

Estás siendo muy bueno hoy

For an instant he thought that he, Martin, was really necessary to that tormented creature (lit. 'being necessary')

(lit.) The calling to the various demonstrations is varied (i.e. the people attending come from various sources)

I'm not being judged

You're being very good today

15.5 Latin-American uses of the continuous

Written – or at least printed – Latin-American Spanish seems to obey the same rules as European Spanish as far as the use of the continuous is concerned. However, there are numerous regional variants in colloquial usage and it seems, in general, that the continuous is used more extensively in Latin-American speech than in Spain.

In many places, the continuous of *ir*, *venir* and other verbs of motion are regularly heard:

—*Estamos yendo a Pato Huachana* —*dijo Lalita* (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue)
¿Cómo le va yendo? (Chile, quoted Kany, 282; Spain *¿Cómo le va?*)

¿Sabes de cuánto tiempo estoy viniendo a Obrajes? (Bolivia, idem; Spain *desde hace cuanto tiempo* and *vengo* . . .)

'We're going to Pato Huachana', Lalita said

How are things with you?

D'you know how long I've been coming to Obrajes?

Kany, 282ff, reports that in the Andean region (including Chile) verbs like *poder*, *tener*, *haber* also appear in the continuous form, especially in popular styles: *Estás pudiendo* = *Puedes* 'You can', *¿Está habiendo?* 'Is there any?' (Spain *¿Hay?*). This is not heard in standard Spanish.

Chilean informants confirm Kany's remark that the continuous is sometimes used in this area to refer to an immediate future, as in English: *estoy yendo* = 'I'm going'/'I'm leaving'.

In colloquial, but not written Mexican, *andar* is much used instead of *estar* to form the continuous: *Ando trabajando* 'I'm working', *¿Qué andas haciendo?* 'What are you doing?'

Similar forms with *andar* are sometimes heard in popular speech in Spain, e.g. *¿Qué andas haciendo?* for *¿Qué estás haciendo?*, but *andar* + gerund normally means 'to go around doing something'. See 20.8.1 for discussion and examples.

16

The subjunctive

16.1 Index to chapter

The following general topics are discussed in the sections shown:

The importance of the Spanish subjunctive	16.2.1
Forms of the subjunctive	16.2.2
The <i>-ra</i> and <i>-se</i> forms compared	16.2.3
Tense agreement and the subjunctive	16.2.4, 16.16
When the subjunctive is not used in clauses beginning with <i>que</i>	16.2.5
Subjunctive or infinitive?	16.2.6
The subjunctive does not always indicate doubt or uncertainty	16.2.7
Regional variations in the use of the subjunctive	16.2.8
The future subjunctive	16.17

The following charts indicate the main uses of the Spanish subjunctive and the section where the topic is discussed further (these charts do not include every point raised in the chapter):

Chart I: Subjunctive in subordinate clauses introduced by *que*

Meaning of main clause	Subjunctive used	Section
Possibility, probability	always	16.3.1
Perhaps	variable	16.3.2
Depending on	always	16.4
Wanting	always	16.5
Needing	always	16.5
Ordering	variable	16.5
Requesting	variable	16.5
Allowing, forbidding	variable	16.5
Causing	always	16.5
Avoiding	always	16.5
Emotional reactions	almost always	16.6
Value judgements	almost always	16.6
Denial	usually	16.7
Doubt	usually	16.8
Fear	usually	16.9
'The fact that . . .'	usually	16.10
Other nouns + <i>de que</i>	variable	16.10

Chart 1: continued

Meaning of main clause	Subjunctive used	Section
Believing and suspecting	yes if negated and sometimes if affirmative	16.11.1, 16.7
Stating, declaring	yes if negated	16.7
Knowing	yes if negated	16.7
Understanding	depends on meaning	16.11.2
Hoping	variable	16.11.3

Chart 2: Subjunctive after subordinators

Meaning of subordinator	Subjunctive used	Section
In order that . . .	always	16.12.2
In order that not . . . /lest	always	16.12.2
Because . . . , since (cause)	depends on meaning	16.12.3
in such a way that . . . (manner)	depends on meaning	16.12.4a
Como (= 'as')	depends on meaning	16.12.4b
Without . . .	always	16.12.4c
In case . . .	variable	16.12.5
Before . . .	always	16.12.6
When . . .	depends on meaning	16.12.6
After	depends on meaning	16.12.6
While . . . , as . . . (time)	depends on meaning	16.12.6
Since . . . (time)	depends on meaning	16.12.6
As soon as . . .	depends on meaning	16.12.6
While . . .	depends on meaning	16.12.6
Until . . .	depends on meaning	16.12.6
Provided that/on condition that	always	16.12.7a
Except . . .	depends on meaning	16.12.7b
Unless . . .	depends on meaning	16.12.7b
Although . . .	variable	16.12.8
In spite of . . .	depends on meaning	16.12.8

Chart 3: Other uses of the subjunctive

	Subjunctive used	Section
To translate: whoever, whatever, whenever however, wherever, the more . . . the more . . .	depends on meaning	16.13
In relative clauses	depends on meaning	16.14
After <i>donde</i> and <i>cuanto</i> introducing clauses	depends on meaning	16.14.3
After superlatives	depends on meaning	16.14.4
For affirmative imperatives	with <i>usted/ustedes</i>	16.15.1
To make negative imperative	always	16.15.1
After words expressing wishes	always	16.15.2
In conditional sentences	depends on meaning	Ch. 25
In a few set phrases	always	16.15.3
Tense agreement rules		16.16

16.2 General remarks on the subjunctive

16.2.1 The importance of the Spanish subjunctive

The subjunctive is a very important feature of Spanish and there is no conclusive evidence that it is dying out. But it is true that spontaneous speech, especially Latin-American, occasionally uses the indicative in constructions that require the subjunctive in formal styles. These colloquial uses of the indicative are mentioned throughout the chapter.

16.2.2 Forms of the subjunctive

There are three non-compound tenses of the Spanish subjunctive: present, imperfect and future. Only two of these are in common use: the present, formed as explained at 13.1.9, and the imperfect.

There are two forms of the latter, one in *-ra* and one in *-se*. These forms are explained at 13.1.10 and in Table 2, p. 199. The relationship between the two forms is discussed in the next section.

Compound tenses of the subjunctive, e.g. *haya hablado*, *hubiera/hubiese hablado*, and continuous forms of the subjunctive, e.g. *esté hablando*, *estuviera/estuviese hablando*, are also common.

The future subjunctive, discussed at 16.17 is virtually obsolete and has been replaced by the present subjunctive.

16.2.3 The *-ra* and *-se* forms compared

When the *-ra* and *-se* forms are used as subjunctives they seem to be completely interchangeable and the two forms are shown side by side in most of the following examples.¹ The *-ra* form is more frequent and in some parts of Latin America has all but replaced the *-se* form, but not in Argentina to judge by the popular dialogue in Manuel Puig's novels.

The *-ra* form has a few other functions as an indicative form that it does not share with the *-se* form in normal styles:

(a) It may be a supposedly elegant literary alternative for the indicative pluperfect, especially in Latin-American texts: *el hombre que ella conociera años antes* 'the man she had met years ago', for *que había conocido* . . . See 14.10.2 for discussion.

(b) It can replace the conditional of *haber* - *habría sido mejor/hubiera sido mejor* 'it would have been better' - and less commonly of a few other verbs. See 14.7.5 for discussion.

(c) It is used in a few set phrases: e.g. *Acabáramos* 'Now I see what you're getting at', *Otro gallo nos cantara* 'That would be another story'.

¹ It has been claimed that there is a slight difference of meaning between sentences like *Yo quisiera que lo hiciera* and *Yo quisiera que lo hiciese* 'I wanted him to do it', but most authorities are convinced that they are interchangeable.

For a contrary view, see Bolinger (1991), 274-82. Bolinger suggests that in conditional sentences the *-se* form is remoter in meaning: *si yo pudiese* more strongly implies 'if I could but I can't' than *si yo pudiera*, which implies 'if I can - we'll have to see'. Likewise, he suggests, the difference in meaning between '*No creo que lo fueral/fuese*' is the difference between an ordinary opinion, and an uncertain opinion.

Bolinger's argument is based on a relatively small sample, and most educated informants deny the existence of these nuances.

16.2.4 Tense agreement and the subjunctive

This is discussed in detail at 16.16. The idea that there is a 'Rule of Agreement' that governs which tense of the subjunctive must be used in Spanish is one of the myths of traditional grammar, but in the vast majority of cases the following scheme applies:

Tense of verb in main clause	Subjunctive tense
Present, perfect (<i>he querido</i> , etc.), future	Present
Conditional, imperfect, preterite, pluperfect	Imperfect

Examples: *Le digo/he dicho/diré que se vaya* 'I tell/have told/will tell him to go away'; *Le diría/decía/dije/había dicho que se fuera/fuese* 'I would tell/was telling/told/had told him to go away'.

16.2.5 When the subjunctive is *not* used in clauses introduced by *que*

It is much easier to state categorically when the subjunctive is **not** used in clauses introduced by *que* than to list all the cases in which it is used.

The subjunctive is **not** used:

(a) After affirmative statements that simply declare that an event happened, is happening or will happen:

<i>Es cierto que hay/hubo una conspiración</i>	It's true that there is/was a conspiracy
<i>Era obvio que lo había hecho</i>	It was obvious that he'd done it
<i>Se prevé que habrá déficit</i>	A deficit is forecasted

(b) After affirmative statements that declare the subject's belief or opinion:²

<i>Creo que habla inglés</i>	I think she speaks English
<i>Yo pensaba que él era más honrado</i>	I thought he was more honest
<i>Dice que viene</i>	She says she's coming
<i>Parece que su mujer está enferma</i>	It seems that his wife is ill

There are occasional exceptions to (b) discussed at 16.11.1.

The negative of sentences under (a) and (b) usually amount to denials of a fact and therefore require the subjunctive, e.g. *No es cierto que hubiera/hubiese una conspiración* 'It isn't true that there was a conspiracy', *No parece que su mujer esté enferma* 'It doesn't seem that his wife is ill'. See 16.7 for discussion.

(c) After subordinators (words like *cuando*, *después de que*, *mientras que*, etc.), when the verb refers to an action that either habitually happens or had already happened at the time of the main verb. Compare *Le pagaré cuando llegue* 'I'll pay him when he arrives' and *Le pago cuando llega* 'I pay him when he arrives' (habitual). See 16.12 for further discussion.

(d) When the subject of the main verb and the subordinate verb are the same, in which case the infinitive is normally used. See next section.

² In this respect Spanish differs from Italian and resembles French. Compare *Creo que es verdad/Je crois que c'est vrai* (both subordinate verbs indicative) and Italian *Credo che sia certo* (second verb subjunctive).

(e) In relative clauses, when the thing or person pointed to by the relative pronoun is known to exist: *Se casó con una mujer que sabe japonés* 'He married a woman who knows Japanese'. See 16.14.4 for details.

16.2.6 Subjunctive or infinitive?

A subjunctive can often be avoided by using an infinitive.

As a general rule, the subjunctive is only required when the subject in the main clause and the subject in the subordinate clause are different. When they are the same the infinitive is used. Thus *yo quiero* 'I want' + *yo voy* 'I go' = *Yo quiero ir* 'I want to go' (same subject). But *yo quiero* + *él va* 'he goes' = *Yo quiero que él vaya*, 'I want him to go' (different subjects).

Verbs of prohibiting, permitting, requesting and advising may allow either construction (see 16.5.2). The infinitive is also sometimes used in spontaneous language in cases where the subjunctive is required in formal styles.

The use of the infinitive is discussed further in Chapter 18, especially at 18.3, where there are several remarks that are relevant to the use of the subjunctive.

16.2.7 The subjunctive does not always indicate doubt or uncertainty

One common misconception about the Spanish subjunctive is that it expresses doubt or uncertainty. This is sometimes true, but the subjunctive is not in fact always obligatory after some common words that express uncertainty (e.g. 'perhaps', 'probably' – see 16.3.2 – and 'to doubt' – see 16.8), and the sentence *Me acostaré cuando se ponga el sol* 'I'll go to bed when the sun sets' does not doubt that the sun will set: the subjunctive is required after *cuando* simply because the sunset is still in the future.

In this respect students of French or Italian must remember that Spanish uses the present subjunctive to indicate future reference in subordinate clauses where the other two languages use the future indicative. Compare *On y ira quand il fera beau temps*, *Ci andremo quando farà bel tempo* (both verbs future indicative) with *Iremos allí cuando haga buen tiempo* (second verb subjunctive). Portuguese differs from all three in using a future subjunctive in this context: *Iremos lá quando fizer bom tempo*.

The subjunctive also expresses certainties in other types of sentence. In *El hecho de que España no tenga petróleo explica en parte las dificultades económicas del país* 'The fact that Spain has no oil explains in part the country's economic difficulties' there is no doubt about Spain's having no oil. It is simply a rule of Spanish grammar that phrases meaning 'the fact that' usually require the subjunctive, possibly because an idea of cause is involved. See 16.10.1 for further discussion.

16.2.8 Regional variations in the use of the subjunctive

There is very little variation in the use of the subjunctive in educated speech throughout the Spanish-speaking world.

In some regions, especially Navarre, the Basque Provinces and Argentina, there is a strong tendency in familiar speech to replace the imperfect subjunctive by the conditional, e.g. *?Si tendría dinero, lo compraría* for *Si tuviera/tuviese dinero, lo compraría* 'If I had money, I'd buy it'. This should not be imitated by foreign learners, although it is acknowledged (at least in Spain and not in writing) as a well-known regionalism.

Also to be avoided is the tendency, heard in sub-standard speech in Argentina and elsewhere in Latin America, to replace the subjunctive by the future indicative after subordinators of time, e.g. *?Se lo diré cuando vendrá* for *Se lo diré cuando venga* 'I'll tell him when he comes'. This construction is also sometimes heard in the speech of small children, which is a significant indication of the unconscious link between the subjunctive and the idea of future time in Spanish.

There is also a tendency in Argentina and probably elsewhere in Latin America to use the indicative in familiar language after subordinators even when the action is or was still in the future: *?Te lo diré cuando llega* 'I'll tell you when he gets here' for *Te lo diré cuando llegue*.

In Argentina, where *voseo* is normal and accepted in conversation among all social groups, careful speakers may nevertheless use standard Spanish subjunctive forms with *vos*. The expected *vos* forms with a stressed final vowel are considered a shade too plebeian for some tastes:

Yo no tengo inconveniente en hablar de perros todo lo que querás (Mafalda cartoon, popular style, Argentina; 'correct' style *todo lo que quieras*)

I don't mind talking about dogs as much as you like

Compare this extract from dialogue between educated adults who address one another as *vos*:

Tengo miedo que no vengas . . . que aflojes (J. Asís, Argentina; Spain *miedo de que*)

I'm scared you won't come . . . that you'll go off the idea

See 11.3.1 for more remarks about Argentine *voseo*.

16.3 Subjunctive after statements of possibility and probability

16.3.1 *Es posible/probable que . . . and similar statements*

In sentences of the pattern statement of possibility/probability/plausibility + *que* + subordinate verb, the latter is in the subjunctive. 'Possibility' also includes meanings like 'the risk that', 'the danger that', 'it is inevitable that', etc.

Es posible que haya tormenta
Era probable que sucediera así

There may be a storm
It was probable that it would happen that way

Es previsible que para el año 2500 tengamos ordenadores superinteligentes que les darán ciento y raya a sus inventores humanos
Puede ser que este auge se prolongue y enriquezca con escritores más originales y propios (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)
Corrías el riesgo de que te vieran/viesen

It's foreseeable that by the year 2500 we will have superintelligent computers that leave their human inventors standing
This boom may last and be enriched by more original and more native authors

You were running the risk of them seeing you

Note

Pueda que is a frequent Latin-American alternative for *puede que/puede ser que* 'maybe'/'it may be that': *Pueda que algo te den y te mejores* (M. Puig, Argentina, dialogue) 'Maybe they'll give you something and you'll get better'.

16.3.2 Subjunctive after words meaning 'perhaps', 'possibly', 'probably'

There are several commonly used words meaning 'perhaps': *acaso*, *tal vez*, *quizá(s)*³, *a lo mejor*, *igual*, *lo mismo*, *posiblemente*.

(a) *Tal vez* (written *talvez* in Latin America) and *quizá(s)* mean the same. When the event referred to is happening in the present or happened in the past, use of the subjunctive is optional⁴:

Tal vez fuese una discusión auténtica. Tal vez representaban una comedia en mi honor (interview, Madrid press; both moods used)

Maybe it was a real argument. Maybe they were putting on an act for my benefit

Tal vez debió irse (*El País*, Spain)

Perhaps he should have gone (i.e. 'resigned')

Quizá ni siquiera entabláramos conversación (J. Marías, Spain; *entablamos* possible)

Perhaps we didn't even start up a conversation

Quizá era pena lo que se traslucía en la sonrisa de mi padre (idem., *fuera/fuese* possible)

Perhaps it was sorrow that came through in my father's smile

If the event is still in the future, only the future indicative or (much more commonly) the present subjunctive may be used, **not** the present indicative:

Quizá/Tal vez venga mañana (not **viene mañana*)

Perhaps she'll come tomorrow

Quizá éste sea el destino auténtico de la humanidad (E. Mendoza, Spain)

Perhaps this is humanity's true fate

Quizá España podrá desempeñar un papel particularmente activo en el restablecimiento de la paz en Europa Central (*El País*, Spain; *pueda* is possible, but expresses more uncertainty)

Perhaps Spain will be able to play a particularly active part in reestablishing peace in Central Europe

If the event *was* still in the future, only the imperfect subjunctive or the conditional can be used:

Quizá/Tal vez vinieran/viniesen/vendrían al día siguiente (not **venían*)

Perhaps they would come the following day

The subjunctive can only be used if *quizá(s)* or *tal vez* precede the verb they modify: one can only say *Era, tal vez, un efecto de esta política . . .* 'It was, perhaps, an effect of this policy . . .'

(b) *Acaso*. When it means 'perhaps' without ironic overtones, *acaso* takes the subjunctive: *Acaso sea verdad que . . .* 'Perhaps it is true that . . .', *una generación que acaso no volviera a ser feliz fuera de sus retratos* (G. García Márquez, Colombia) 'a generation that would perhaps never again be happy outside its portraits'. This use of *acaso* to mean 'perhaps' is rather literary.

Acaso is, however, frequently followed by the indicative in all styles as a way adding a sarcastic note to questions or to make a rhetorical question. It then loses the element of doubt associated with the meaning 'perhaps' and suggests that the answer to the question is obvious:

³ *Quizá* is more frequent than *quizás* and is preferred in written Spanish in memory of the original spoken Latin form *quis sapit*, which did not end in *s*.

⁴ Use of the indicative is ever more frequent, but it may still sound incorrect to some older speakers.

<i>¿Acaso has visto alguna vez que no llueva en verano?</i> (implying 'of course you haven't')	Have you ever seen that it didn't rain in Summer?
<i>¿Acaso todos los paganos no odian a los huambisas?</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue)	Don't all the Indians (lit. 'pagans') hate the Huambisa tribe?

(c) *A lo mejor* does not take the subjunctive.⁵ It is heard everywhere on both continents, but it is confined to spoken language or informal styles:

<i>Ni siquiera la nombró. A lo mejor se ha olvidado de ella</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue)	He didn't even mention her. Maybe he's forgotten her
<i>A lo mejor encontramos con gente conocida</i> (G. Cabrera Infante, Cuba, dialogue, Spain <i>nos encontramos con . . .</i>)	Maybe we'll meet some people we know

(d) In Spain *igual* and *lo mismo* are also used with the indicative in familiar speech with the meaning 'perhaps': *Si te viera todos los días, igual acabaría despreciándote* (J. A. Zunzunegui, dialogue, quoted B. Steel (1976), 134) 'If I saw you every day I might end up despising you', *Llama a la puerta. Lo mismo te da una propina* 'Knock on the door. Maybe he'll give you a tip'. These two constructions are considered sub-standard by some speakers and they are not heard in Latin America.

(e) *Posiblemente* 'possibly' and *probablemente* 'probably' obey the same rules as *tal vez* and *quizá(s)*: they can be followed by a subjunctive or by an indicative form when they refer to events in the present or past. If they refer to the future or to the future in the past they can be followed by the subjunctive or by a future or conditional tense, but not by any other indicative tense:

<i>Posiblemente quedara algo de alcohol etílico en nuestras venas humorísticas</i> (G. García Márquez, Colombia; <i>quedaba</i> or <i>quedase</i> possible)	Perhaps there was still some ethyl alcohol left in the veins of our humour
<i>Posiblemente lo más criollo de nuestra cocina radica en las sopas, los potajes y los guisos</i> (Cuba Internacional, Cuba; <i>radique</i> possible. <i>Guiso</i> more or less interchangeable with <i>guisado</i> in Spain)	Possibly the most authentic (lit. 'creole') aspect of our cuisine lies in the soups, vegetable potages and stews
<i>Posiblemente lleguen/llegarán mañana</i> (not <i>llegan</i>)	Possibly they'll arrive tomorrow
<i>. . . alguna oscura sensación de incertidumbre, que probablemente será tan incierta como el resto</i> (J. Cortázar, Argentina)	some obscure sensation of uncertainty which will probably be as uncertain as the rest
<i>Probablemente el mérito sea de Ada</i> (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain, dialogue)	You can probably thank Ada for that

As a direct verbal modifier *posiblemente* is not particularly colloquial: *ser posible que . . .* (always followed by subjunctive), *quizá* or *tal vez* are more common.

⁵ R. Navas Ruiz (1986), 36, says that the subjunctive is 'infrequent' with *a lo mejor*, but he gives no examples. We have seen it with the subjunctive in the Colombian press but we doubt whether this is accepted usage.

16.4 'Depending'

Statements + *que* that mean 'to depend on . . .' require the subjunctive:

De las mujeres depende que se coma en el mundo (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)

It's women who ensure that people eat in this world (lit. 'that one eats in this world depends on women')

Miguel contaba con que lo llamaran/llamasen aquella noche

Miguel was counting on them ringing him that night

16.5 Statements of 'influence' + *que*

16.5.1 General

This includes sentences in which the subject of the main clause influences or attempts to influence the outcome of the action in the subordinate clause. Such verbs typically include those that mean wanting, ordering, needing, causing, allowing, prohibiting, advising, persuading, encouraging, avoiding, and excluding.

When these verbs are used with *que* they always require the subjunctive. However, when the subjects of the main verb and the subordinate verbs refer to the same person, the infinitive is used: see 16.5.2a.

Some of these verbs can also optionally be used with an infinitive even when the subjects are different. This possibility is discussed in 16.5.2b.

The following are some common verbs that come under this category (the list is not exhaustive):

<i>aconsejar que</i>	to advise that
<i>animar a que</i>	to encourage to
<i>causar que</i>	to cause
<i>conseguir/lograr que</i>	to succeed in
<i>contribuir a que</i>	to contribute to
<i>cuidar de que</i>	to take care that
<i>decir que</i>	to tell someone to ⁶
<i>dificultar que</i>	to hinder
<i>esforzarse porque</i>	to make an effort to
<i>evitar/impedir que</i>	to avoid
<i>exigir que</i>	to require that
<i>hacer falta que</i>	to be necessary that
<i>hacer que⁷</i>	to make
<i>insistir/empeñarse en que</i>	to insist on
<i>mandar/ordenar que</i>	to order that
<i>necesitar que</i>	to need to
<i>obligar a que</i>	to oblige to
<i>oponerse a que</i>	to be against
<i>pedir que</i>	to ask/request that
<i>permitir que</i>	to allow to
<i>preferir que</i>	to prefer that
<i>prohibir/impedir que</i>	to prohibit/prevent from
<i>querer/desear que</i>	to want

⁶ Not **decir de*, which is not Spanish: cf. French *dire à quelqu'un de faire quelque chose* = *decirle a alguien que haga algo* 'to tell someone to do something'.

⁷ But *hacer que* 'to pretend' takes the indicative: *Hace que está enfermo* 'He pretends that he's ill'.

<i>rogar que</i>	to request (literary)
<i>salvar de que</i>	to rescue/save from
<i>ser necesario que</i>	to be necessary that
<i>suplicar que</i>	to implore to
<i>vigilar que/asegurarse de que</i>	to make sure that

But there are many alternative ways of expressing the ideas associated with these verbs and these also require the subjunctive when they are followed by *que*.

Examples:

<i>Quiero que estudies más</i>	I want you to study more
<i>Se esforzaba porque los demás vivieran/viviesen en mejores condiciones (esforzarse por 'to make an effort to . . .')</i>	He strove to ensure that the others lived in better conditions
<i>Organicé que todas nos vistieramos como ellas (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)</i>	I arranged it so that all of us women should dress like them
<i>Soy partidario de que lo publiquen</i>	I'm in favour of them publishing it
<i>Esto dio como resultado que no le hicieran/hiciesen caso</i>	The upshot of this was that they ignored him/her
<i>Cierta impaciencia generosa no ha consentido que yo aprendiera a leer (J.L. Borges, Argentina)</i>	A certain generous impatience did not allow me to learn to read
<i>El primer paso, le dijo, era lograr que ella se diera cuenta de su interés (G. García Márquez, Colombia)</i>	The first thing to do, she said to him, was to get her to notice his interest
<i>Nadie impidió que Hemingway escribiera y publicase sus libros (G. Cabrera Infante, Cuba)</i>	Nobody prevented Hemingway from writing and publishing his books
<i>Hay que evitar que ellos se enteren</i>	We have to avoid them finding out

Notes

(i) A noun phrase like *la decisión de que* 'the decision that', *la orden de que* 'the order that', *el deseo de que* 'the wish that', etc. can replace the main verb: *La orden de que se apagaran/apagasen las luces fue el coronel quien la dio* 'It was the colonel who ordered the lights to be turned off', *el anhelo de que Dios exista* 'the longing for God to exist', *La idea era que las chicas ayudasen/ayudaran a los chicos* 'The idea was that the girls should help the boys', *La petición de que se la indultara/indultase no llegó a tiempo*, 'The petition for her reprieve didn't arrive in time'.

(ii) Some verbs may or may not imply 'influence', according to their meaning. They take the subjunctive only when an order or wish is implied: *Decidió que lo firmaran/firmasen* 'He decided that they should sign it', *Decidió que lo habían firmado* 'He decided (i.e. 'came to the conclusion') that they had signed it', *Dijo que se terminara/terminase* 'He said (i.e. 'ordered') that it should be finished', *Dijo que se había terminado* 'He said (i.e. 'announced') that it was finished'. Likewise *establecer que* 'to stipulate that' (subjunctive)/'to establish the truth that' (indicative), *pretender que* 'to try to/'to aim at/'to wish that' (subjunctive)/'to claim that' (indicative), *escribir* 'to write that' (indicative) 'to write instructing that' (subjunctive).

(iii) Statements of 'hope' are discussed at 16.11.3.

16.5.2 Use of the infinitive with verbs of 'influence'

Some of the verbs listed under 16.5.1 may appear with an infinitive construction in the following circumstances:

(a) If the subject of the main clause and the subject of the subordinate clause are co-referential, i.e. they refer to the same person or thing. (This rule is discussed in more detail at 18.2.):

<i>Quiero hacerlo but Quiero que tú lo hagas</i>	I want to do it/I want you to do it
<i>No se deja pensar en ella</i>	He doesn't let himself think of her
<i>Determinaron mandarle/lo a un internado</i>	They decided to send him to a boarding-school
<i>Ya has logrado enfadarme</i>	Now you've managed to make me angry

(b) With certain verbs, even when they are not co-referential. These are verbs that can be constructed with an indirect object, as in *Te ayudaré a conseguir/la que consigas lo que quieres* 'I'll help you to get what you want'.

The most common of these verbs are:

<i>aconsejar a</i>	to advise to (see note (iv))	<i>mandar/ordenar</i>	to order
<i>animar a</i>	to encourage	<i>obligar a</i>	to oblige
<i>ayudar a</i>	to help	<i>permitir</i>	to permit (but not <i>consentir</i> , which always takes <i>que</i>)
<i>dejar</i>	to allow	<i>persuadir a</i>	to persuade
<i>impedir</i>	to prevent	<i>prohibir</i>	to prohibit
<i>incitar a</i>	to spur on/incite	<i>proponer</i>	to propose
<i>inducir a</i>	to induce/persuade	<i>recomendar</i>	to recommend (see note (iv))
<i>invitar a</i>	to invite		

Examples:

<i>Incitó/Indujo/Animó/Persuadió a los rebeldes a protestarla que protestaran/protestasen</i>	He incited/persuaded/encouraged the rebels to protest
<i>Te dejo que me invites/Te dejo invitarme</i>	I'll let you pay for me
<i>Te prohíbo que cantes/Te prohíbo cantar</i>	I forbid you to sing
<i>Le obligan a que llegue pronto/Le obligan a llegar pronto</i>	They make him come early
<i>Me mandan a que recoja el correo/Me mandan a recoger el correo</i>	They send me to collect the post
<i>Había ordenado retirarse a todas sus sirvientas (A. Gala, Spain; or a todas sus sirvientas que se retrasen/retiraran)</i>	She had ordered all her ladies-in-waiting to withdraw
<i>Permitió a su hija que bailara/bailase/Permitió a su hija bailar</i>	He allowed his daughter to dance
<i>Nos propuso trabajar/que trabajásemos/trabajáramos con él</i>	He proposed that we should work with him

Notes

(i) Some of these verbs can appear without an object in their main clause; English requires an object like 'one': *un delgado vestido que impedía llevar nada bajo él/ . . . que se llevara/llevoase nada debajo de él* 'a thin dress that prevented one from wearing anything underneath it', *Esto permite pensar que . . .* 'This allows one to think that . . .'

(ii) When more than two object pronouns are involved, the subjunctive is, however, preferred: *Te dejo que me lo compres* 'I'll let you buy it for me' is better than *?Te dejo comprármelo*.

(iii) When the object is inanimate, the subjunctive is obligatory: *El embalse permite que las aguas del río alcancen unos niveles adecuados* (not **permite a las aguas alcanzar . . .*) 'The dam allows the water of the river to reach suitable (or 'adequate') levels'.

(iv) Some verbs seem to be in a transitional state. Two of these are *aconsejar* 'to advise' (especially in the construction *aconsejar que no* 'to advise not to') and *recomendar* 'to recommend'. The conservative construction is with the subjunctive and this is safer for foreigners, but an infinitive construction is frequently heard colloquially: *Te recomiendo que lo hagas/Te recomiendo hacerlo* 'I recommend you to do it', *Te aconsejo que no lo hagas/Te aconsejo no hacerlo* 'I advise you not to do it', but, rather arbitrarily, *El médico le aconsejó que no hiciera caso* (not **no hacer caso*) 'The doctor advised him not to pay any attention'.

(v) *Pedir* appears with the infinitive when the subjects are identical: *Pidió hablar con el director* 'He asked to speak to the director', *Pidió verme a las seis* 'He asked to see me at six o'clock'. But it requires the subjunctive when the subjects are different, as do other verbs of requesting: *Pidió/Suplicó/Rogó que contestaran/contestasen cuanto antes* 'He asked/implored/requested them to answer as soon as possible'.

16.6 Emotional reactions and value judgements

16.6.1 Emotional reaction or value judgment + *que* + subjunctive

The subjunctive is used in sentences of the pattern 'Emotional reaction' + *que* + subordinate verb. 'Emotional reaction' covers a vast range of possibilities including regret, pleasure, blame, displeasure, surprise, statements of sufficiency and insufficiency, importance, etc. It also includes value judgements like 'it's logical that . . .', 'it's natural that . . .', 'it's enough that . . .'.

The non-pronominal (i.e. 'non-reflexive') verbs and non-verbal expressions in List A are followed only by *que*: *Le enfada que el perro no deje de ladrar* 'It annoys him that the dog won't stop barking'. These verbs do not appear – at least in educated usage – in the pronominal form with *de que*: one says *le irrita que* + subjunctive, not *?se irrita de que . . .*. If used pronominally *porque* follows: *se irritaba porque . . .* + indicative 'he got irritated because . . .'. The list is not exhaustive.

The verbs in List B (also not exhaustive) have pronominal counterparts followed by *de que*. In these cases one can either say *le aburre que* + subjunctive 'it bores him that . . .' or *se aburre de que* + subjunctive 'he is bored by the fact that . . .'. The expressions in the list not based on verbs are also followed by *de que* + subjunctive.

It is important in Spanish to differentiate between emotional reactions and value judgements on the one hand and statements of fact like *es verdad que* 'it's true that', *es obvio/evidente que* 'it's obvious that', *es indiscutible que* 'it is beyond dispute that'. The latter require the indicative, even though the distinction may sometimes appear arbitrary to an English speaker. For statements like 'it is not true that', see 16.7.1.

List A: Emotional reactions and value judgements followed by *que* (and not by *de que*)

enfadarle/enojarle a alguien que
fastidiarle a alguien que
irritarle a alguien que
deprimirle a alguien que
apenarle a alguien que
importarle a alguien que
darle lástima a alguien que
extrañarle a alguien que
satisfacerle a alguien que
parecerle bien/mal a alguien que
gustarle a alguien que
encantarle a alguien que
aguantar que/tolerar que
perdonar que
preferir que
aceptar que

to anger someone that
 to bother someone that
 to irritate someone that
 to depress someone that
 to pain someone that
 to matter to someone that
 to fill someone with pity that
 to puzzle someone that
 to satisfy someone that
 to seem good/bad to someone that
 to like: *me gusta que* 'I like the fact that'
 to enchant someone that
 to put up with
 to excuse the fact that
 to prefer that
 to accept that

merecer que
basta que/falta que
es mejor que/peor/igual que
es significativo que
es terrible/lógico/natural/curioso que
es una pena/tragedia/ventaja que
está bien/mal que
¡qué pena/lástima que!
ser una suerte que
vale más que

to deserve that
 it's enough that/lacking that
 it's better/worse/the same that
 it's significant that
 it's terrible/logical/natural/curious that
 it's a shame/tragedy/an advantage that
 it's good/bad that
 what a pity that!
 to be a stroke of luck that
 it would be better that

List B: Emotional reactions followed by *de que*

The verbs in this list may appear either with *que* and a direct object (as in List A) or as pronominal verbs followed by *de que* (see also 16.6.2 for further remarks on these verbs):

aburrirle a alguien que/aburrirse de que

to bore someone that/to be bored by the fact that

emocionarle a alguien que/emocionarse de que

to excite someone that/to get excited by the fact that

alegrarle a alguien que/alegrarse de que

to cheer someone that/to be happy that

entusiasmarle a alguien que/entusiasmarse de que

to make someone enthusiastic that/to be enthusiastic that

asustarle a alguien que/asustarse de que

to frighten someone that/to be frightened that

horrorizarle a alguien que/horrorizarse de que

to horrify someone that/to be horrified that

sorprenderle a alguien que/sorprenderse de que

to surprise someone that/to be surprised that

avergonzarle a alguien que/avergonzarse de que

to shame someone that/to be ashamed that

indignarle a alguien que/indignarse de que

to make someone indignant that/to be indignant that

entristecerle a alguien que/entristecerse de que

to sadden someone that/to be saddened that

dolerle a alguien que/dolerse de que

to hurt someone that/to be hurt that

es el culpable de que

he is guilty of the fact that

es hora de que/ha llegado el momento de que

it's time that/the time has arrived that

Further examples of both types of construction:

Me molesta que te quejes tanto

It annoys me that you complain so much

Solo/Sólo faltaba que tú dijeras/dijeses eso

All it needed was for you to say that

Es lógico que lo niegue

It's logical for him to deny it

Es una vergüenza que dejen que pasen estas cosas

It's a disgrace that they allow these things to happen

Basta que les des la mitad ahora

It's enough for you to give them half now

Es curioso que todos los asamblearios se fijen más de lo que escuchan por los auriculares

It's curious that all conference members have more confidence in what they hear over their headphones

(J. Marías, Spain)

Fue una casualidad que yo me

It was pure chance that I was there

encontrara/encontrase allí

¡Qué rabia que no nos suban el sueldo!

What a nuisance that they won't raise our salary!

Se aburre de que Gene Kelly baile siempre con Cyd Charisse (G. Cabrera Infante, Cuba, diálogo)

He gets bored with the fact that Gene Kelly always dances with Cyd Charisse

El catedrático de portugués se sorprendió mucho de que yo me sorprendiera cuando me contó que este año sólo tenía un estudiante (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)

Estoy hasta el moño de que tengamos que ser siempre nosotras las que debemos recoger la mesa (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain)

Andrés era el culpable de que me pasaran todas esas cosas (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)

The professor of Portuguese was very surprised that I was surprised when he told me that he only had one student this year

I'm sick to death with the fact that it's always us women who have to clear the table

It was Andrés's fault that all these things were happening to me

Notes

(i) *Menos mal que* 'thank heavens that' takes the indicative: *Menos mal que no se ha roto* 'Thank heavens it's not broken'. The form *mejor . . .* 'it would be best that' is also followed by the indicative. This abbreviation of *sería mejor que* is very common in Latin America, but it is also heard in colloquial language in Spain: *Mejor lo dejamos para más tarde* 'Better that we leave it for later'. Compare *Sería mejor que lo dejáramos/dejásemos para más tarde* 'It would be better to leave it until later'.

(ii) In spontaneous language in Latin America a value judgement about a past or habitual event may be expressed by the indicative. This construction is sometimes seen in writing in Latin America, especially in Argentina: *El innegable genio de Joyce era puramente verbal; lástima que lo gastó en la novela* (J.L. Borges, Argentina) 'Joyce's undeniable genius was purely verbal; a pity that he used it on the novel', *Era curioso que Morelli abrazaba con entusiasmo las últimas hipótesis de trabajo de la ciencia física* (J. Cortázar, Argentina) 'It was curious that Morelli enthusiastically embraced the latest working hypotheses of physical science', *Es curioso que uno no puede estar sin encariñarse con algo* (M. Puig, Argentina, dialogue) 'It's strange that one can't manage (lit. 'can't be') without getting fond of something', *Me da lástima que terminó* (idem, dialogue) 'I'm sorry it's ended'.

(iii) English speakers should beware of over-using *si* 'if' in sentences involving a value judgement: *Sería maravilloso que/si no hubiera/hubiese hambre en el mundo* 'It would be marvellous if there were no hunger in the world'.

(iv) The subjunctive is still required when the main clause is deleted: . . . *pero que él diga eso . . .* (some phrase like *es increíble que . . .* having been deleted from the sentence) ' . . .that he should say that . . .'. . .that he should have the nerve to say that . . .'

16.6.2 Further remarks on emotional reactions followed by *de que*

As was stated in 16.6.1, the subjunctive is used with these expressions and foreigners should respect this rule. But the indicative mood is sometimes heard in popular speech when the verb is in the present or past. This tendency should not be imitated by foreign students:

*Me alegré de que (pensaban)/pensaran/
pensasen hacerlo*

*Se indignaba de que sus suegros
(creían)/creyeran/creyesen en la pena de
muerte*

*Se horrorizaba de que la (trataban)/trataran/
tratasen así*

I was glad that they intended to do it

He/she was outraged that his/her in-laws
believed in the death penalty

He was shocked at their treating her this
way

Note

Quejarse de que 'to complain that . . .' seems to foreign speakers to be an emotional reaction, but it is in fact treated as a verb of statement and is always followed by the indicative. *Lamentar* 'to regret the fact that' . . . takes the subjunctive. *Lamentarse de que* 'to lament the fact that . . .' takes the subjunctive when it expresses an emotional reaction and the indicative when it merely makes a statement. *Protestar de que* 'to

protest that . . .’ takes the indicative: *Se queja de que Berta la hace quedarse a dormir la siesta* (M. Puig, Argentina, dialogue) ‘She complains about Berta making her stay in to sleep in the afternoon’, *Protestaba de que/Se lamentaba de que el gobierno había subido los impuestos* ‘He was protesting at/lamenting the fact that the Government had raised taxes’, *Lamento que ustedes no me hayan comprendido* ‘I regret that you did not understand me’.

16.6.3 Lo + emotional reactions

If an emotional reaction is expressed by a phrase involving the ‘neuter article’ *lo + que + verb + ser*, or *lo + adjective + ser que . . .*, e.g. *lo que me irrita es que . . .* ‘what irritates me is that . . .’, *lo trágico fue que . . .* ‘the tragic thing was that . . .’, the grammar of the subjunctive is slightly different. The subjunctive is obligatory if the verb in the main clause points to an event still in the future:

Lo peor será que no venga nadie
Lo malo sería que no terminaran/
terminasen el trabajo a tiempo
Lo más provocante de la ley es que provoque
una reacción violenta del gobierno cubano (La
Jornada, Mexico)

The worst thing will be if no one comes
 The problem would be if they didn’t
 finish the work on time
 The most provocative thing about the
 law is that it may produce a violent
 reaction from the Cuban government

However, if the main verb is timeless, habitual or in the past, the verb is usually in the indicative, although the subjunctive is also possible:

Lo que me indigna es que la sociedad todavía
condena los amores o amoríos entre una
señora madura y un jovencito (C. Rico-
Godoy, Spain)
Lo que más me sorprendió . . . fue que . . .
se habían detenido y vuelto (J. Marias,
Spain)

What makes me mad is that society
 still condemns romances or love affairs
 between a mature woman and a young
 man
 What surprised me most was that they
 had stopped and turned round

Note

In some cases use of the subjunctive depends on the meaning: *Lo increíble era que Pedro no lo sabía* ‘The incredible thing was that Pedro didn’t know about it’, *Lo increíble era que Pedro no lo supiera/supiese*, same translation. In this case there is a slight difference between moods. The indicative assumes that Pedro did not know whereas the subjunctive leaves open the question whether he knew or not. The choice depends on whether the action denoted by the subordinate verb is a reality to the speaker. Compare: *Lo peor es que mi padre nunca dice nada* ‘The worst thing is that my father never says anything’ and a possible reply to this: *Sí, lo peor es que no diga nada* ‘Yes, the worst thing is that he doesn’t say anything’ (i.e. if that is the case).

In the second example the speaker does not claim knowledge of the facts described by the first speaker. This subtle distinction, based on the nature of the speaker’s background knowledge, will be found to operate in many examples of subjunctive use.

16.7 Subjunctive after denials

16.7.1 Subjunctive after firm denials

In sentences of the pattern ‘denial’ + *que* + subordinate verb, the subordinate verb is usually in the subjunctive. However, statements like ‘I don’t think that

. . .', 'I don't believe that . . .' may or may not be denials, according to how certain the speaker's knowledge is; see the next section for discussion.

Niego que sea así

Mayta negó que hubiera intervenido en el rapto (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue; or *hubiese*)

Esto no significa que haya que esperar un cambio radical de actitud (J. Cortázar, Argentina)

Yo no he dicho que seas una histérica (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain, dialogue)

No ocurre/sucedé que haya eclipse todos los días

No se trata de que tengas que quedarte todos los días hasta las nueve de la noche

I deny that it's like that

Mayta denied he was involved in the kidnapping

This doesn't mean that one must expect a radical change of attitude

I never said you were a hysteric

It doesn't happen that there's an eclipse every day

It's not a question of your having to stay till nine p.m. every day

Notes

(i) The indicative is occasionally found after *negar que* and verbs of similar meaning, although this construction is unusual, especially in Spain: *Niego que hubo bronca* (*Proceso*, Mexico) 'I deny there was a row', *¿También va Vd a negar que los ingleses se lavan?* (J. Camba, Spain; the indicative is appropriate here because a denial would not be reasonable) 'Are you also going to deny that the English wash?', . . . *pero negaban tozudamente que transportaban marihuana en esta ocasión* (*Granma*, Cuba) 'but they stubbornly denied that they were carrying marihuana on this occasion', *Rechaza que Dios existe*⁸ (usually *exista*) 'He denies that God exists'.

(ii) Note that a negative question does not amount to a denial, so the indicative is used: *¿No es verdad que ha dicho eso?* 'Isn't it true that he said that?', *¿No sientes que el corazón se te ensancha al ver esto?* (J. Ibarguengoitia, Mexico, dialogue) 'Don't you feel your heart getting bigger when you see this?'.

(iii) *No ser que* is a denial and is normally followed by the subjunctive, except in questions: *No es que yo diga que es mentira* 'It's not that I'm saying that it's a lie', *No es que se dijeran grandes cosas* (J. Marías, Spain) 'It isn't that important (lit. 'great') things were said', *No es que fueran por lo tanto mejores escultores que los egipcios de aquel período* (E. Sábato, Argentina, interview) 'It isn't that they were, as a result, better sculptors than the Egyptians of that period', *¿No será que no quiere hacerlo?* 'Isn't it the case that he doesn't want to do it?', *¿No sería que no quedaban más?* 'Wouldn't it be that there were none left?'.

Exceptionally *no ser que* is followed by the indicative, in which case the denial is more confident and assertive: *No era que tomaba posesión del mundo* (M. de Unamuno, Spain) 'It wasn't that he was taking possession of the world'.

16.7.2 Subjunctive after negated verbs of knowing, perceiving, stating and communicating

After an affirmative statement of knowledge, perception, belief or communication, e.g. *sé que . . .*, *veo que . . .*, *creo que . . .*, *digo que . . .*, *afirmo que . . .* 'I claim that . . .', *significa que . . .* 'it means that . . .', *reconozco que . . .* 'I recognise that . . .', the subordinate verb is in the indicative (for occasional exceptions with verbs like *creer*, *sospechar*, see 16.11.1). This generalization also applies to statements of fact such as *es verdad/ciertoevidente/indudable/seguro que . . .*

If these expressions appear in the negative, they may amount to a firm denial, in which case the verb in the subordinate clause will be in the subjunctive, as specified at 16.7.1:

⁸ Example from Navas Ruiz (1986), 69.

Digo que es así/No digo que sea así
Creo que él lo conoce/No creo que él lo
conozca
Recuerdo que tu madre era esbelta/No
recuerdo que tu madre fuera/fuese esbelta
Claro que aparte de fumar y beber no veía que
se pudiera hacer otra cosa (M. Vargas Llosa,
Peru, or pudiese)

I say that it is so/I don't say that it is so
 I think he knows him/I don't think he
 knows him
 I remember your mother was slim/I don't
 remember your mother being slim
 Obviously, apart from smoking and
 drinking he didn't see that there was
 anything else to do

However the subjunctive is sometimes optional after such negations, depending on the degree of uncertainty involved. In some cases the subjunctive causes a slight change of meaning:

Yo sabía que él estaba ahí/Yo no sabía que él
estaba ahí (concedes that he was there)
Yo no sabía que él estuviera/estuviese ahí
 (suggests that the speaker is still not
 convinced the person was there)

I knew he was there/I didn't know he
 was there
 I didn't know he was there

Notes

(i) Choice of the subjunctive in these sentences depends essentially on the speaker's background knowledge. If one knows for a fact that X is a thief, one says *No confesaba que había robado el dinero* 'He didn't confess to stealing the money'. If X may be innocent one says *No confesaba que hubiese/hubiera robado el dinero*.

For this reason, statements of ascertainable fact, e.g. *Yo no sabía que la puerta estaba abierta* 'I didn't know the door was open' are more likely to take the indicative, and matters of opinion, e.g. *No creo que sea muy útil* 'I don't think it's very useful', are almost certain to take the subjunctive.

(ii) Compare the different translations of *decir* in the following examples: *Ha dicho que venía* 'She said he/she was coming', *No he dicho que venía* 'I didn't say I/she/he was coming', *No he dicho que viniera/viniese* 'I didn't tell him/her/you to come', *El chofer dijo que él se ganaba la vida como podía, y al que no le gustara que bajase y tomase un taxi para él solito* (C. Fuentes, Mexico, *chofer* = *chófer* in Spain) 'The taxi driver said he earned his living as well as he could and anybody who didn't like it could get out and get a taxi for himself'.

(iii) If the verb in the main clause is in the imperative form, the verb in the subordinate clause remains in the indicative: *No digas que es verdad* 'Don't say it's true', *No creas que esto es lo único que hacemos* (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue) 'Don't think that this is the only thing we do', *El tal Pepe me tenía a metro y medio, pero no crean ustedes que me vio* (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain, dialogue) 'This Pepe was standing a metre and a half from me, but don't get the idea that he saw me'.

16.8 Statements of doubt

Dudar que takes the subjunctive, but used in the negative it is followed by an indicative when it really means 'to be sure that':

Dudo que sea verdad
No dudo que sea verdad lo que dices

I doubt whether it's true
 I don't doubt whether what you say is
 true (tentative remark)

but

No dudo que es verdad lo que dices
No dudo que vendrá/venga
Dudo que yo pueda venir mañana/Dudo
poder venir mañana (infinitive possible
 since the verbs are in the same person)

I don't doubt (i.e. 'I'm convinced') that
 what you say is true
 I don't doubt he'll come
 I doubt I can come tomorrow

No hay duda que ella puede ser discutida
(M. Vargas Llosa, Peru; Spain *No hay*
duda de que . . .)

There is no doubt that it can be debated

16.9 Statements of fear

Temer/tener miedo de que 'to fear' and other statements of similar meaning may take the subjunctive or a future indicative tense (including future time expressed by *ir a* 'to be going to . . .') or, if they refer to the past, a past subjunctive or an indicative future in the past. For *temerse que* see note (ii):

Temo que le moleste/Temo que le va a molestar/molestará/le vaya a molestar

I'm afraid it may upset him

Temíamos que le molestará/molestase/

We were afraid it would upset him

Temíamos que le iba a molestar/
molestaría/Temíamos que le fuera a molestar

I was scared that you'd gone

Yo tenía miedo de que te hubieras ido

(G. Cabrera Infante, dialogue, Cuba)
. . . *para no ver el mar por la escotilla porque*
nos da miedo de que entre (E. Poniatowska,
Mexico)

so as not to see the sea through the
hatchway, because we're afraid it'll
come in

The subjunctive is always used if the main verb is negated:

No temía que me fuera a atacar

I wasn't afraid he/she/it was going to
attack me

Notes

(i) Redundant *no* (see 23.2.4) instead of *que* after *temer(se)* changes the meaning. The subjunctive is obligatory. Compare *Temo que no te va a gustar* 'I'm afraid you're not going to like it' and redundant *no* in *Temo no te vaya a gustar demasiado* 'I'm afraid in case/lest you're going to like it too much', *Temo no te vayas a enfadar* 'I'm afraid in case/lest you get cross'.

(ii) *Temerse que* usually means little more than 'I'm sorry to say that . . .' and it therefore takes the indicative: *Me temo que no he sido muy delicado* 'I fear I haven't been very discreet', *De eso me temo que no puedo hablarte* (L. Sepúlveda, Chile, dialogue) 'I'm afraid I can't talk to you about that'.

(iii) *Temer que* may also occasionally be found with the indicative when it refers to timeless or habitual actions: *Temo que la verdadera frontera la trae cada uno dentro* (C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue) 'I fear that each one of us carries the real frontier inside ourselves'.

16.10 Subjunctive after 'the fact that . . .' and after other noun phrases

16.10.1 'The fact that . . .'

There are three common ways of translating 'the fact that': *el hecho de que*, *el que*, and *que*; the latter two items have various other meanings, for which see the Index.

(a) With all of these the subjunctive is used whenever any kind of value judgement or emotional reaction is involved:

(El) *que no diga nada no debería afectar tu*
decisión

The fact that he says nothing shouldn't
affect your decision

No hay duda de que el hecho de que me **hayan** dado el Nobel va a dar mayor resonancia a todo lo que diga y haga (G. García Márquez, Colombia)
 Lo que me hace insoportable tu vanidad es el hecho de que **hiera** la mía (Cartoon by J. Ballesta in Cambio16, Spain)
 El que en semanas se **haya** conseguido cabrear⁹ a la vez a todos . . . es todo un síntoma que se debería convertir en preocupación (Cambio16, Spain)

There is no doubt that the fact that they've given me the Nobel prize will give more weight to everything I say and do

What makes your vanity unbearable is the fact that it wounds mine

The fact that it has been possible to annoy everybody simultaneously in a matter of weeks is a symptom which should become a matter of concern

(b) The indicative is required when the main verb is a verb of knowing, perceiving, or a statement of a fact. When *el hecho de que* is preceded by a preposition it almost always states a certain fact and takes the indicative:

Se ha dado cuenta del hecho de que **tiene** que trabajar para vivir
 No lo hace por el hecho de que no le **gusta**

He/she has realized he has to work in order to live

She doesn't do it because she doesn't like it

Le disgustaría que usted no viniera sólo por el hecho de que **viene** él
 Que a las autoridades francesas les **gusta** tratar amistosamente con terroristas es algo demostrado (Cambio16, Spain)
 Que el poder **tiende** al abuso . . . no debe escandalizar a nadie (El País)

She would be upset if you didn't come only because he was coming

The fact that French authorities like to have friendly dealings with terrorists is demonstrably true

That power tends to abuse is a fact that should scandalize no one

(c) In some cases the subjunctive and indicative appear to be interchangeable. We can detect no difference of meaning between the following alternatives, but foreigners will not go wrong if they apply the rules set out in (a) and (b):

Le molesta el hecho de que no **venga/viene** a verle
 No le daba importancia al hecho de que él no le **hacía/hiciera/hiciese** caso
 No quiero que el hecho de que te **conozco/conozca** sea un obstáculo
 El hecho de que no me **veía/viera/viese** me hacía sentirme seguro

The fact that she doesn't come to see him annoys him

She didn't mind the fact that he paid her no attention

I don't want the fact that I know you to be an obstacle

The fact that she couldn't see me made me feel safe

Note

El que 'the fact that' must be differentiated from *el que* 'the person that' (sometimes only context makes the sense clear):

El que haya dicho eso no sabe lo que dice

The person who/Whoever said that doesn't know what he/she's talking about

El que haya dicho eso no tiene importancia

The fact that he/she said that has no importance

16.10.2 Subjunctive after other noun phrases used as subordinators

When a noun phrase replaces a verb phrase it is normally connected to a following subordinate clause by *de que*: compare *Esperamos que llueva* 'We

⁹ *Cabrear* 'to annoy' is considered vulgar by some speakers. *Enfadar* (Lat. Am. *enojar*) is more respectable.

hope it will rain' and *la esperanza de que llueva* 'the hope that it will rain', and see 33.4.2 for more detailed discussion of the use of *de que* after nouns.

In general the mood of the subordinate verb after such noun phrases is governed by the rules that would affect verb phrases of the same meaning, i.e. *la posibilidad de que . . .* 'the possibility that . . .' requires the subjunctive because *es posible que . . .* 'it's possible that . . .' does.

However, there is a series of miscellaneous noun phrases after which choice between the subjunctive and indicative is determined by meaning. Two factors may combine or operate independently to invoke the subjunctive: (a) the type of verb in the main clause, (b) the reality or non-reality of the event expressed by the subordinate clause.

(a) In the following examples the verb in the main clause is of a type (emotional reaction, possibility, etc.) that would itself require the subjunctive:

*Le contrarió la casualidad de que
encontrase/encontrara ahí a su primo
Podría dar la casualidad de que
hubiera/hubiese huelga
No podía soportar la idea de que no le
dieran/diesen el puesto*

He was annoyed by happening to find
his cousin there

It could happen that there'll be a strike

He couldn't stand the idea of not getting
the job

(b) In the following sentences the indicative is used because the subordinate verb indicates an established fact or reality, even though in some cases the person affected may not yet know the truth of the situation:

*Siempre daba la casualidad de que no
llegaban a tiempo
Se tenían que enfrentar con el problema de
que no tenían dinero
Consiguió que aceptara la idea de que no le
darían el puesto*

It always happened that they never
arrived on time (habitual fact)

They had to face up to the problem of
not having any money (fact)

She managed to get him to accept the
idea that they wouldn't give him/her the
job (i.e. accepting a fact)

Tengo la convicción de que no hace nada

I'm convinced she/he doesn't do
anything (knowledge)

*Se encontró con la sorpresa de que estaba de
mal humor*

He was surprised to find that she was in
a bad mood (factual)

*Le atormentaba la obsesión de que su mujer le
engañaba*

He was tormented by the obsession that
his wife was being unfaithful to him
(factual as far as he knows)

(c) There remains a murky area in which the choice between subjunctive and indicative is either more or less optional or is dictated by some principle so obscure that it defies our ingenuity to explain it. The following examples must speak for themselves:

Tuve la suerte de que no me viera/vio

I was lucky in that he didn't see me (on
that occasion; factual, but subjunctive
more usual)

but

Tenía la suerte de que no me veía

I was lucky in that he didn't see me (on
one or several occasions. Indicative
only)

Tenía siempre la preocupación de que le **ibalfuera** a pasar algo
 Vivía con la pesadilla de que **perdería** su dinero
 Le animaba la ilusión de que lo **conseguiría**

Le animaba la ilusión de que ella lo **conseguiría/consiguiera/consiguiese**

He always worried that something might happen to him
 He lived with the nightmare of losing his money (indicative only)
 He was encouraged by the dream of getting it (same subject for both verbs)
 He was encouraged by the dream that she would get it (different subjects)

16.11 Subjunctive after special verbs

16.11.1 Subjunctive after *creer, parecer, suponer* and *sospechar*

We said at 16.2.5b and 16.7.2 that expressions of belief + *que* take the indicative – *Creo que Dios existe* ‘I believe that God exists’ – unless they are negated: *No creo que Dios exista* ‘I don’t believe God exists’.

However, the subjunctive occasionally appears after these verbs even when they are not negated. The meaning is then more hypothetical or hesitant, but the difference can barely be translated into English:

A veces parece que estás/estés soñando
Sospecho que es/sea mentira
como si la Historia fuera una especie de saltamontes; y parece que lo sea pero en otro sentido (A. Sastre, Spain, dialogue)
¿Usted cree que esto ayude? (Manuel Puig, Argentina, dialogue; incredulous tone)
¿Usted cree que yo quiera lastimar a esta niña preciosa? (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)

Sometimes it seems you’re dreaming
 I suspect it’s a lie
 as if History were a sort of grasshopper;
 and it seems that it is but in a different sense
 Do you really think that this helps?
 Do you really think I want to hurt this lovely girl?

The last two examples are Latin American. In Spain the indicative (*ayuda, quiero*) is used in this kind of question.

16.11.2 Subjunctive after *comprender/entender que, explicar que*

All of these verbs take the subjunctive when they are negated, e.g.

No entiendo que ahora me pregunten sobre la ponencia (interview in *El País*, Spain)

I don’t understand why people are asking me now about the written statement/paper

Comprender takes the subjunctive when it means ‘to sympathize with’:

Comprendo que no quieras pedir dinero prestado
Yo comprendo que los concejales defendieran sus posiciones dentro del partido (Santiago Carrillo in *Cambio16*, Spain; or *defendiesen*)

I understand your not wanting to borrow money
 I understand the councillors defending their positions inside the party

Explicar usually takes the subjunctive except when it really means ‘to state’ or ‘to say’:

Esto explica que las mutaciones de la literatura estén estrechamente ligadas a las innovaciones técnicas

This explains how changes in literature are intimately linked to technical innovations

but

Manuel explicó que *había estado enfermo* Manuel explained that he had been ill

16.11.3 Subjunctive after *esperar que*

Esperar 'to hope' may be followed by the subjunctive, by the future indicative, by the indicative of *ir a*, or by the conditional. The subjunctive is the commoner form:

Espero que le convenzas/convencerás I hope you convince him
la esperanza de que todo acabel/acabará/va the hope that everything will end well
a acabar bien

. . . *con la esperanza de que ella haría lo mismo* (C. Fuentes, Mexico) in the hope that she'd do the same

Por un momento la invadió la esperanza de que su marido no habitara ya el reino de los vivos (S. Pitol, Mexico; or *habitase*) For a moment she was overcome by (lit. 'invaded by') the hope that her husband no longer dwelt in the realm of the living
Espero que me vas a pagar I hope you're going to pay me

Notes

(i) *Esperar a que/aguardar a que* 'to wait for . . .' take the subjunctive: *Yo estaba esperandolaguardando a que fueral/fuese otro el que lo hiciera/hiciese* 'I was waiting for someone else to do it'.

(ii) *No esperar que* always takes the subjunctive: *Yo no esperaba que me fuera a escribir* 'I didn't expect she was going to write to me'.

16.12 Subjunctive after subordinators

16.12.1 General

Subordinators are such words as 'before', 'after', 'provided that', 'because', and 'when', which introduce a subordinate clause.

The general rule governing the mood of the verb after subordinators is: if the event referred to has or had occurred, the verb is in the indicative; if the event has or had not yet occurred, the verb is in the subjunctive. Examples:

Se lo di cuando llegó (the arrival had happened) I gave it to him when he arrived
Se lo daré cuando llegue (the arrival hasn't happened yet) I'll give it to him when he arrives
Yo iba a dárselo cuando llegara/llegase (the arrival had not yet happened) I was going to give it to him when he arrived

It follows from this that a few subordinators, e.g. *antes de que* 'before', *para que/a que* 'in order that', always take the subjunctive because they must refer to something that has or had not yet happened. In some cases, e.g. *puesto que* 'since', *debido a que* 'due to the fact that', the event has obviously taken place and the indicative is always required. But in most cases the mood is variable and depends on the rule given.

The subordinate clause may precede or follow the main clause: *Después de que llegaron, empezamos a hablar/Empezamos a hablar después de que llegaron* 'After they arrived we started talking'/'We started talking after they arrived'.

Subordinators that take only the indicative are discussed in Chapter 33.

For replacement of the subjunctive after subordinators by the infinitive see 18.3.

16.12.2 Subjunctive with subordinators of purpose

(a) *A fin de que, para que/porque, con el objeto de que, con el propósito de que, con la intención de que* and *a que* when it means 'in order to', are always followed by a subjunctive because they obviously point to an event that has or had not yet happened:

<i>Vengo a que/para que me dejes un poco de azúcar</i>	I've come to borrow some sugar
<i>Me callé porque/para que no me acusaran/acusasen de metomentodo</i>	I kept silent so that they wouldn't accuse me of interfering
<i>He escrito una circular a fin de que se enteren todos</i>	I've written a circular so that everybody knows about it

Note

For the difference between *por* and *para* when both mean 'in order to', see 34.14.7.

(b) A number of phrases express negative intention or avoidance i.e. 'so that not'. They are not always easily translated into English now that the word 'lest' has fallen into disuse:

<i>Trabaja más, no sea que te despidan</i>	Work harder so that they don't (lit. 'lest they') fire you
<i>Volvió la cara al pasar no fuera que le reconocieran/reconociesen</i>	He turned his face as he passed by to avoid being recognised ('lest he be recognised')
<i>Me subí al coche en tres minutos no se me fuera a arrepentir de la invitación (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)</i>	I got into the car within three minutes lest he regretted/so that he wouldn't regret the invitation
<i>Llámalo de testigo no vayan a decir que me envenenaste (ibid., dialogue)</i>	Call him as a witness so they don't say that you poisoned me
<i>Devuélvele el dinero, no ocurra que nos demande</i>	Give him back the money. We don't want him to sue us

16.12.3 Subjunctive with subordinators of cause and consequence

(a) The following are always followed by the indicative:

<i>pues</i>	because (see 33.5.3)
<i>puesto que</i>	since
<i>ya que</i>	since/seeing that
<i>en vista de que</i>	seeing that/in view of the fact that
<i>debido a que</i>	due to the fact that

Como, when it means 'since'/'because' is also followed by the indicative. It is discussed in detail at 33.5.2. When followed by the subjunctive, *como* means 'if' and is discussed at 25.8.2.

Cómo means 'how'. This use is discussed at 24.7.

<i>Invítame ya que/puesto que tienes tanto dinero</i>	Since you have so much money you can pay for me
<i>Como tienes tanto dinero me puedes invitar (in this meaning como must appear at the head of the phrase; see 33.5.2 for further discussion)</i>	Since you have so much money you can pay for me

(b) *Porque* is usually followed by an indicative, but requires the subjunctive when it means 'just because'/'only because' and the main verb is negated. Sometimes it can be preceded by *sólo/solo*:

Porque tú lo digas, no voy a callarme

I'm not going to shut up just because *you* say so

No lo hago porque tú lo digas
Que nadie venga a nosotros porque piense
*que va a obtener enchufes*¹⁰ (Cambio16,
Spain)

I'm not doing it just because *you* say so
Let no one come to us (just) because
they think that they'll get special favours

but

No lo hago porque tú lo dices

I won't do it because you say so/said I should

No lo hago sólo porque tú lo dices

I'm doing it, but not simply because
you're telling me to

No salgo contigo sólo porque tienes un Ferrari

The fact that you have a Ferrari isn't the
only reason I go out with you

Compare:

Sólo porque tengas un Ferrari no voy a salir contigo

The fact that you have a Ferrari isn't a
good enough reason for me to go out
with you

The subjunctive is used after *bien porque . . . o/ya porque . . . o* meaning 'whether . . . or':

Bien/Ya porque tuviera algo que hacer o
porque estuviera cansado, el caso es que no
estuvo muy amable con nosotros

Whether he had something to do or
whether he was tired, the fact is that he
wasn't very kind to us

Note

If *porque* means *para que* (as it does after verbs like *esforzarse porque* 'to make an effort in order that . . .'), the verb is always subjunctive:

Nos esforzamos porque/para que todos
tengan agua limpia
Estoy un tanto apurado y como impaciente
porque pase el trago

We're making an effort to ensure that
everyone has clean water
I'm a bit worried and rather impatient for
this unpleasantness to pass

(c) *De ahí que* 'hence the fact that' is almost always followed by a subjunctive:

Su padre murió de una borrachera, de ahí que
no beba

His father died from a drunken fit, that's
why he doesn't drink

De ahí que visitar nuestra casa se
convirtiese de vez en cuando en motivo de
excursión (L. Goytisolo, Spain)

This is why visiting our house
occasionally became the pretext for an
excursion

(d) *Dado que* takes the indicative if it means 'given that', the subjunctive if it means 'if it is the case that':

dado que es así . . .
dado que él quiera hacerlo . . .

given that this is the case . . .
if it's the case that he wants to do it . . .

16.12.4 Subjunctive with subordinators of result, aim and manner

The basic rule is that these take the indicative when they imply result and the subjunctive when they refer to an aim or intention.

¹⁰El enchufe, literally 'plug', is also used in Spain to mean 'connections': *Está muy enchufado* 'He's well-connected', *el enchufismo* 'the old boy network', 'the inside favours system'; also *el amiguismo*.

(a) When they indicate the result of an action the following take the indicative:

<i>así que</i>	so (= 'as a result')
<i>conque</i>	" "
<i>de modo que</i>	in such a way that, so
<i>de manera que</i>	" "
<i>de suerte que</i>	" "
<i>de forma que</i>	" "

<i>Tú sólo tienes la culpa, de modo que/conque/así que no te puedes quejar</i>	You've got only yourself to blame so you can't complain
<i>Lo hicieron en silencio de modo/forma/manera que no se enteró el portero</i>	They did it in silence so (as a result) the doorman didn't find out

De modo que/de manera que/de forma que may indicate either result or aim, and in the latter case they take the subjunctive. Unfortunately, some varieties of English (e.g. British) in which the subjunctive has virtually disappeared no longer systematically clarify the difference between result and aim in this kind of sentence, so *Lo hizo de modo que nadie se enteró* and *Lo hizo de modo que nadie se enterase/enterara* may both be translated 'He did it so no one realized', despite the fact that they mean entirely different things in Spanish.

It seems that North Americans systematically differentiate 'He did it so no one realized' (*de modo que nadie se enteró*) and 'He did it so no one would realize' (subjunctive only: *de modo que nadie se enterase/enterara*). But translating from British varieties of English often poses the dilemma that there is no way of knowing whether the original implies result or aim:

<i>Salió de modo/manera que nadie lo notara/notase</i>	He left so no one would notice
<i>Salió de modo/manera que nadie lo notó</i>	She left so/and nobody noticed
<i>Compórtate de modo/manera que no sospeche</i>	Behave so as to avoid him suspecting
<i>Alguien debería . . . modificar el sistema de enseñanza, de forma que el colegio de los niños empezara en junio</i> (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain)	Someone ought to modify the educational system so that children's school starts in June

(b) *Como* requires the subjunctive when it refers to an action that is or was still in the future¹¹:

<i>Hazlo como quieras</i>	Do it however you like
<i>Lo hizo como quiso</i>	He did it the way he wanted
<i>Te dije que podías venir como quisieras/quisieses</i>	I told you you could come any way you liked

For *como* + subjunctive meaning 'if' see 25.8.2; for *como* meaning 'as' (i.e. 'because') see 33.5.2.

(c) *Como si* 'as if' and *sin que* 'without' always take the subjunctive:

<i>Debes hacerlo sin que tenga que decírtelo</i>	You must do it without my having to tell you
--	--

¹¹ In literary styles, *como* is occasionally found with the *-se* or *-ra* forms when it refers to a past action: *como se diese/diera cuenta de que* . . . 'as/when he realized that . . . '.

Me miró como si no me viera/viese

She looked at me as if she couldn't see me

Éste/Este las trató con gran familiaridad, como si las viera todos los días (C. Fuentes, Mexico)

He treated them very familiarly just as if he saw them every day

Notes

(i) *Comme si* takes the indicative in French: *comme si elle avait quinze ans* = *como si tuviera quince años* 'as if she was fifteen years old'.

(ii) *Es como si* 'it's as if . . .' takes the indicative when it means the same as *es como cuando* 'it's the same as when . . .': *Es como si/cuando no puedes respirar y te asustas* 'It's the same as when you can't breathe and you get scared'.

Como si . . . is also occasionally found colloquially in Spain with the indicative to mean 'even if': —*No iré hasta las ocho*. —*Como si no vienes, a mí me da igual* (Spain, colloquial) "I won't come until eight o'clock." "Even if you don't come, it's the same to me".

(iii) *Tan . . . como que . . .* 'such . . . as that . . .' takes the subjunctive: *Dos héroes como nosotros no pueden retroceder por cosas tan sin importancia como que le coma a uno un gigante* (children's story book, Spain) 'Two heroes like us can't turn back because of such unimportant things as being eaten by a giant, (lit. 'as that a giant eats one')'.

16.12.5 Subjunctive with subordinators of possibility

En caso de que calls for the subjunctive:

Las pondré en la maleta en caso de que las necesites

I'll put them in the suitcase in case you need them

Las puse en la maleta en caso de que las necesitaras/necesitases

I put them in the suitcase in case you needed them

But *por si* usually (but not invariably) takes the indicative, although *por si acaso* may take either mood:

Llévate el paraguas por si (acaso) lluevellloviera/lloviese

Take the umbrella in case it rains

Está apuntando hacia la otra acera, por si hay un ataque por retaguardia (J. Ibarguengoitia, Mexico, dialogue)

He's aiming at the other pavement/sidewalk in case there's an attack from the rear

Por si fuera poco . . . (set phrase)

As if this wasn't enough . . .

Conviene que vayas enterado por si alguien te pidiera una aclaración (E. Mendoza, Spain, or *pidiese*)

It would be best if you were informed (lit. 'went informed') in case anyone asks you for an explanation

Note

Suponiendo que 'supposing that' requires the subjunctive: *Suponiendo que venga, ¿le vas a dejar entrar?* 'Supposing he comes, are you going to let him in?'

16.12.6 Subjunctive with subordinators of time

After subordinators of time the subordinate verb is in the subjunctive when its action is or was still in the future.

Students of French and Italian must resist the temptation to use the future tense after these subordinators. Compare *Je lui donnerai son livre quand il arrivera*, *Gli darò il suo libro quando arriverà* and *Le daré su libro cuando llegue* 'I'll give him his book when he arrives':

Llegamos antes de que empezara/empezase a nevar (for *antes de que* see note (i))

We arrived before it started snowing

Me saludará cuando llegue

She'll greet me when I arrive/she arrives

Me saluda cuando llega

She greets me when she arrives (habitual)

Iban a cenar cuando llegaran/llegasen los demás

A medida que/según/conforme vayan entrando se lo diré

. . . las ideas se irán haciendo más y más claras en la medida en que nos aventuremos más y más por la senda que iremos construyendo (C. Almeyda in *El País*)

Me doy cuenta, a medida que Rosita pasa mis notas a máquina, de que he reunido cerca de doscientas páginas (C. Fuentes, Mexico)
Tan pronto como acabe la huelga, las cosas marcharán mejor

Tan pronto como acabó la huelga todo se arregló

Nomás que oscurezca te vas por la carretera (J. Ibargüengoitia, Mexico, dialogue; for the Latin-American word *nomás* see 23.2.5)

Apenas pueda, te llamo (J. Asís, Argentina)

Hasta que no llegue a ser ministro no se quedará contento

Hasta que no llegó a ser ministro no se quedó contento

En cuanto se estrene la obra, se agotarán las entradas

Siempre que la vea se lo diré

Notes

(i) *Antes de que* is always followed by the subjunctive because it must logically always refer to a future event. Both *antes de que* and *antes que* are correct, the former being more common in Spain.

Antes de is used before an infinitive: *Hazlo tú antes de que salga él* 'You do it before he leaves' but *Hazlo antes de salir* 'Do it before you leave'. *Después (de) que* likewise becomes *después de* before an infinitive.

Antes que may mean 'rather than' and must not then be confused with *antes de que: cualquier cosa antes que casarse* 'anything rather than get married'.

(ii) *Después (de) que* 'after' and similar phrases – *a los pocos días de que*, 'a few days after', *desde que* 'since', etc. – always take the subjunctive when they refer to an action still in the future. If they refer to a past action they should logically take the indicative, but in written Spanish the *-ra* and *-se* forms are quite common. (For a more detailed discussion see 14.10.3.)

(iii) *Mientras (que)* 'as long as'/'while'. When it means 'on condition that'/'provided that' the subjunctive is obligatory. When it refers to the future and cannot be translated by 'as long as' either mood is possible; when it refers to completed events in the past the indicative is used: *Mañana puedes hacer la comida mientras (que) yo arreglo la casa/mientras (que) yo arregle la casa* 'Tomorrow you can do the cooking while I tidy the house', *Pero, mientras lo necesite, no puedo dejar de verlo* 'But as long as I need him, I can't stop seeing him', *Mientras (que) sigas así, no conseguirás nada* 'You won't get anywhere while/as long as you go on like that', *Mientras (que) respetaba nuestro arreglo, todo iba bien* (completed) 'So long as/While he/she respected our arrangement, everything went well', *Le dije que no conseguiría nada mientras no trabajara/trabajase más* 'I told her she'd achieve nothing as long as she didn't work harder'.

Mientras que can also be a coordinator: *Yo trabajo todo el día mientras que tú no haces nada* 'I work all day while you do nothing'. The *que* is normal here.

(iv) *Apenas* 'hardly' and other words of the same meaning are also discussed at 23.5.7.

They were going to have supper when the rest arrived (i.e. they had not yet arrived)

I'll tell them as they come in

The ideas will get increasingly clear as we venture further along the path we will be building

I realize, as Rosita types out my notes, that I've assembled more than 200 sheets of paper

Things will get better as soon as the strike is over

As soon as the strike was over everything was all right

As soon as it gets dark you go down the road

As soon as I can, I'll ring you

He won't be satisfied until he becomes a Minister

He wasn't satisfied until he became a Minister

All the tickets will be sold after the first night

I'll tell her every time I see her

16.12.7 Subjunctive with subordinators of condition and exception

They all call for the subjunctive. (For *si* 'if' and *como* when it means 'if' see 25.8.1 and 25.8.2).

(a) Condition

<i>con tal (de) que</i>	provided that
<i>siempre que</i>	" "
<i>siempre y cuando</i> (more emphatic)	" "
<i>a condición de que</i>	on condition that
<i>bajo (la) condición de que</i>	" "
<i>a cambio de que</i>	in return for
<i>El Gobierno está preparado a negociar siempre quesiempre y cuando/con tal (de) que la condición de que sean razonables sin la condición previa de que se anule el contrato . . . (El País)</i>	The Government is ready to negotiate provided they are reasonable
<i>Te convido a cenar con tal (de) que me dejes escoger el restaurante</i>	Without the pre-condition that the contract should be cancelled . . .
<i>Cuando yo le informé sobre la conducta de usted añadió cincuenta mil pesetas a la minuta a cambio de que yo hiciera esta llamada telefónica (M. Vázquez Montalbán)</i>	I'll buy you dinner provided you let me choose the restaurant
	When I told him about your behaviour he added fifty thousand pesetas to my professional fees in return for my making this telephone call

(b) Exception (occasionally followed by indicative in cases discussed in note (i))

<i>a no ser que</i>	unless
<i>salvo que</i>	unless/save that
<i>excepto que</i>	unless/except that
<i>a menos que</i>	" "
<i>fuera de que</i> (less common)	" "
<i>como no (sea que)</i>	unless (in suggestions)
<i>como no fuera que</i>	unless
<i>Me casaré contigo a no ser que/salvo que hayas cambiado de idea</i>	I'll marry you unless you've changed your mind
<i>Íbamos de vacaciones en agosto salvo/a no ser que/como no fuera que yo estuviera muy ocupado</i>	We took our holidays/vacation in August unless I was very busy
<i>No sé qué sugerir. Como no (sea que) vayamos al teatro</i>	I don't know what to suggest unless we go to the theatre

Note

Excepto/salvo que, con la salvedad de que are followed by the indicative when they mean 'except for the fact that':

<i>Ella hablaba mejor, excepto que/salvo que/con la salvedad de que pronunciaba mal las eñes</i>	She spoke better/best, except for the fact that she pronounced the <i>eñes</i> badly
--	--

16.12.8 Subjunctive with subordinators of concession

There are several ways of expressing 'although', of which *aunque* is the most common:

<i>aunque</i>	although
<i>así</i>	"
<i>siquiera</i>	"
<i>aun cuando</i> (emphatic)	"

<i>a pesar de que</i>	despite the fact that
<i>pese a que</i> (literary)	" "
<i>a despecho de que</i> (literary)	" "

These require the subjunctive if they point to an event which is or was still in the future. *Así* requires the subjunctive when it means 'although':

<i>Es un valiente, no lo confesaré así/aunque le maten</i>	He's a brave man, he won't admit it even if they kill him
<i>No lo confesó aunque le ofrecieron dinero</i>	He didn't confess even though they offered him money
<i>No lo confesaría aunque le mataran/ matasen</i>	He wouldn't confess it even if they killed him
<i>Tienen que cumplir, así caminen bajo la lluvia</i> (La Jornada, Mexico)	They have to fulfil/(US) 'fulfill' their mission, even if they walk in the rain
<i>Vendieron la finca, a pesar de que el abuelo se oponía</i>	They sold the estate, despite the fact that grandfather opposed it
<i>Venderán la finca, a pesar de que el abuelo se oponga</i>	They'll sell the estate, despite the fact that grandfather will/may oppose it
<i>Dijeron que iban a vender la finca, a pesar de que el abuelo se opusiera/opusiese</i>	They said they would sell the estate despite the fact that grandfather would/might oppose it

Notes

(i) A subjunctive is normally used after *aunque* when something expected is in fact denied: *Aunque sea español no me gustan los toros* 'Even though I'm Spanish I don't like bullfights', *Las generalidades de esa magnitud, aunque se formulen con brillantez, no sirven de gran cosa* (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru) 'Generalizations of that magnitude, even when brilliantly formulated, aren't much use'.

(ii) When *siquiera* is used to mean 'although' (literary style) it requires the subjunctive: . . . *dos fuentes independientes . . . a las que se aludirá, siquiera sea vagamente* (Libro de estilo de El País) 'two independent sources, which will be mentioned, even if in vague terms'.

16.13 Translating 'whether . . . or', 'however', 'whatever', 'whoever', 'whichever' and 'the more . . . the more . . .'

The phrases discussed in this section are often translated by the *forma reduplicativa*, i.e. constructions in which the subjunctive verb is repeated, as in *digan lo que digan* 'whatever they say', *pase lo que pase* 'whatever happens', *No hay salida para ti, hagas lo que hagas, vayas a donde vayas* (C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue) 'There's no way out for you, whatever you do, wherever you go'. After a negative the second verb is sometimes omitted: *quieras o no (quieras)* 'whether you want to or not'.

16.13.1 'Whether . . . or'

The *forma reduplicativa* is used:

<i>Estaré de tu parte, tengas razón o no la tengas</i>	I'll be on your side, whether you're right or wrong
<i>Estuviese o no enfermo, lo cierto es que no vino al trabajo</i>	Whether he was ill/(US) sick or not, the fact is he didn't come to work

16.13.2 'However'

Por mucho que/por más que + verb, *por mucho* + noun + verb, *por (muy)* + adjective + verb.

Use of the subjunctive follows the usual rule: if the event referred to is or was a reality, the indicative is used: *Por mucho que/más que se lo dijo, no lo hizo* 'He didn't do it however much she asked him' but *Por mucho que se lo digas, no lo hará* 'He won't do it however much you ask him'.

Further examples:

Por más que las esperanzas de Eulalia y su padre crecían, no lograban contagiar a Andrés (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue; real event)

Por más que llueva no se le van a resucitar los novillos muertos (M. Puig, Argentina)

Por modesta que fuera su familia, no era el más pobre del colegio (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)

Por buena vista que uno tenga no alcanza a ver más que piedras (J. Ibarguengoitia, Mexico, dialogue)

However much Eulalia's and her father's hopes grew, they didn't manage to inspire (lit. 'infect') Andrés

However much it rains, his dead steers won't come back to life

However humble his family may have been, he wasn't the poorest one in the school

However good one's eyesight is/may be, one can see nothing but stones

Note

With verbs meaning 'say', 'order', etc., the subjunctive may appear even though the action is a reality: *Por mucho que/más que se lo dijera, no lo hacía* 'However often she told him, he didn't do it'. The imperfect indicative *decía/hacía* and the preterite *dijo/hizo* are also possible here. The difference is one of nuance, the subjunctive being rather more emphatic or insistent.

16.13.3 'The more . . . the more'

Cuanto/a los/as más . . . más. The general rule is applied: if the event is a reality the indicative is used:

Cuanto más coma más querrá
Cuanto más comía, más quería
Cuanta más leche echas, más espesará

Yo sabía que cuanto más bebiera/bebiese más me emborracharía

The more he eats the more he'll want
The more he ate the more he wanted
The more milk you add, the thicker it'll get

I knew that the more I drank, the drunker I would get

For the use of *mientras* in this construction, and, in Latin America, of *entre* instead of *cuanto*, see 5.11.

16.13.4 'Whatever'

The *forma reduplicativa* is normally used to translate 'whatever':

diga lo que diga
Den lo que den, siempre vamos al Metropolitan (E. Poniatowska, Mexico, dialogue)
Cómpralo sea como sea

Dijo que lo compraría fuera como fuera/fuese como fuese

whatever he says
Whatever's on (lit. 'whatever they give'), we always go to the Metropolitan cinema

Buy it whatever it looks like (or 'Buy it whatever the cost')

He said he'd buy it whatever it was like (or 'whatever the cost')

Como quiera (or comoquiera) que sea and *comoquiera que fuera* could be used in the last two examples, but they are less usual.

Note

The English 'whatever' may mean 'whichever', in which case it is best translated by

an appropriate tense form of *sea cual sea*. This construction is preferred in written and spoken language to the rather stilted *cualquiera que* and *comoquiera que*: *Las camelias cualquiera que/sea cual sea su color son bonitas* 'Camelias are pretty whatever their colour'. (For a general discussion of *cualquiera* see 9.8.)

When 'whatever' means 'everything' it will usually be translated by *todo lo que* or *cuanto*: *Trae todo lo que puedas* 'Bring whatever/everything you can', *Aprenderé todo lo que/cuanto pueda* 'I'll learn whatever/everything I can'.

16.13.5 'Whichever'

When this word means 'which', 'whichever one' or 'the one that' it is usually translated by *que* or *el que* + subjunctive:

<i>Escoge la maceta que más te guste</i>	Choose whichever flower pot you like most
—¿Cuál me llevo?	'Which should I take?'
—El que usted quiera	'Whichever (one) you like'

For more details on the use of the subjunctive in relative clauses, see 16.14.

16.13.6 'Whenever'

Cuando with the subjunctive when the event referred to is or was still in the future, and the indicative in all other cases:

<i>Vienen cuando quieren</i>	They come whenever they want
<i>Vendrán cuando quieran</i>	They'll come whenever they want

Cuando quiera que is old fashioned for *cuando*, but it is used as an occasional literary alternative for *siempre que*:

<i>Cuando quiera que en la vida española se ponen tensos los ánimos . . .</i> (R. Pérez de Ayala, quoted by Seco (1992), 126)	Whenever passions are stirred in Spanish life . . .
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16.13.7 'Anyone who . . .', 'whoever . . .'

Cualquiera que 'anyone who . . .' cannot be replaced by the *forma reduplicativa*:

<i>Cualquiera que te vea pensará que vas a una fiesta</i>	Anyone who sees you will think you're going to a party
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If 'anyone who . . .' means 'those who . . .', 'people who . . .', a nominalizer plus the subjunctive is used, i.e. *quien* or *el que*:

<i>El que/Quien se crea eso está loco</i>	Anyone who believes that is mad
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Quienquiera is also found in the same contexts. According to Seco (1992), 317, it is, in Spain, exclusively literary. But the following example suggests that it survives colloquially in other countries: *Quienquiera se crea eso está loco* (G. Cabrera Infante, Cuban dialogue; Spain *el que crea . . .* or *quien crea . . .*) 'Anyone who thinks that is mad'.

Quienquiera que sea 'whoever it is' seems to be in free variation with the *forma reduplicativa*: *No abras la puerta, sea quien sea/quienquiera que sea* 'Don't open the door, whoever it is'.

16.13.8 'Wherever'

Dondequiera or *forma reduplicativa*:

<i>Dondequiera que voy/Vaya donde vaya me lo/le encuentro</i>	Wherever I go I meet him
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<i>Dondequiera que vaya/Vaya donde vaya me lo/le encontraré</i>	Wherever I go I'll meet him
<i>Dondequiera que fuese/Fuese donde fuese, me lo/le encontraba (or fuera . . .)</i>	Wherever I went I met him

16.14 Subjunctive in relative clauses

In this section nominalizers such as *el que* 'the one that', *quien* 'the one who', *aquellos que* 'those who' etc., are treated as relative pronouns. They are also discussed under Nominalizers at 36.1.

See 16.13. for *cualquiera que*, *quienquiera que*, *cualdoquiera que*, *dondequiera*.

16.14.1 Subjunctive in relative clauses when the antecedent is not yet identified

Spanish uses the subjunctive in such cases to express a nuance that English usually ignores. Compare *los que digan eso* 'those who say that' (if anyone does) and *los que dicen eso* 'those who say that' (some do). The difference in Spanish is striking. Contrast:

<i>Prefiero un coche que tenga cuatro puertas</i>	I prefer a car with four doors (i.e. any car)
<i>Prefiero ese coche que tiene cuatro puertas</i>	I prefer that car with four doors
<i>Busco un médico que sepa acupuntura (N.B. no personal a)</i>	I'm looking for a doctor (i.e. 'any doctor') who knows acupuncture
<i>Conozco a un médico que sabe acupuntura</i>	I know a doctor who knows acupuncture
<i>No leo novelas que tengan más de doscientas páginas</i>	I don't read (any) novels that have more than two hundred pages
<i>Tengo muchas novelas que tienen más de doscientas páginas</i>	I've got many novels with more than two hundred pages

Further examples:

<i>Me voy a casar con el primero que me lo pida</i>	I'm going to marry the first man who asks me
<i>Haz lo que quieras</i>	Do whatever you like
<i>¿Sabes de alguien que tenga apellido en este país? (E. Sábado, Argentina, dialogue)</i>	Do you know anyone in this country who has a surname (i.e. an illustrious name)?
<i>. . . cualquier reacción que uno pueda tener suena a sobreactuado (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain)</i>	Any reaction one might have sounds like over-acting/sounds overdone
<i>Dígame qué tienen que esté muy sabroso (J. Ibarguengoitia, Mexico, dialogue)</i>	Tell me what you've got that tastes really good

Notes

(i) Compare French *J'apprendrai ce que je pourrai* (future indicative) and *Aprendré lo que pueda* 'I'll learn what I can'.

(ii) In literary styles, the subjunctive is common in relative clauses when the main clause is introduced by *como* 'like' or *como si fuerafuese* 'as if it were . . .': . . . *como un ángel que perdiera/perdiese las alas* ' . . . like an angel that had lost its wings', . . . *el sol se pone súbitamente – como si fuera un interruptor el que lo apagara* (J. Marías, Spain; or *fuese*) ' . . . the sun sets suddenly – as if it were a switch that had turned it off'.

16.14.2 Subjunctive in relative clauses when the existence of the antecedent is denied

If the antecedent does not exist the verb in the relative clause is in the subjunctive:

No hay nadie que sepa tocar más de un violín a la vez
No había mendigo a quien él no diera/diese limosna
No hay quien le entienda
En realidad no existen culturas 'dependientes' y emancipadas ni nada que se les parezca (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)
¿A quiénes conoces que se vean feas esperando un hijo? (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue; *se vean* = *estén* in Spain)

There is no one who can play more than one violin at once
 There was no beggar to whom he wouldn't give alms
 There's no one who can understand him
 In reality there are no 'dependent' and emancipated cultures or anything like them
 What women do you know who look ugly when they're expecting a baby?

16.14.3 Subjunctive after the relatives *donde* and *cuanto*

(For *dondequiera que* see 16.13.8.)

The subjunctive is used if the reference is to a yet unknown or non-existent entity:

Comeré en el pueblo donde me pare
Comí en el pueblo donde me paré
Buscó una zona donde el mar llegara debilitado (M. Vázquez Montalbán)
Te daré cuanto me pidas
Le di (todo) cuanto me pidió

I'll eat in **whichever** village I stop in
 I ate in the village I stopped in
 He looked for an area where the sea was coming in with less force
 I'll give you anything you ask
 I gave her everything she asked

16.14.4 Subjunctive in relative clauses after superlative expressions

The Indicative is used after the superlative when comparison is made with things or persons that the speaker knows personally:

Eres la chica más inteligente que he conocido
Fue el mayor incendio que he visto en mi vida

You're the most intelligent girl I've met
 It was the biggest fire I've ever seen in my life

But if the idea of 'ever' is stressed or the comparison alludes to every example that *may* ever have existed, the subjunctive is normal:

Eres la chica más inteligente que haya existido nunca/jamás
Es la mayor tontería que se haya oído nunca/jamás
la mayor transacción con divisas fuertes que se haya hecho en el Río de la Plata (E.Sábato, Argentina)

You're the most intelligent girl that ever existed
 It's the greatest lot of rubbish that was ever heard
 the biggest hard-currency deal made in the River Plate region

16.15 Subjunctive in main clauses

The subjunctive is primarily a feature of subordinate clauses, but it may appear in a main clause in certain circumstances.

16.15.1 Subjunctive with the imperative

The subjunctive is required:

(a) To form all negative imperatives: *No me hables* 'Don't talk to me', *No se vayan ustedes* 'Don't go away'.

(b) To form affirmative (i.e. not negative) imperatives with the pronouns *usted*, *ustedes*: *Guarden silencio* 'Keep quiet', *Váyase* 'Go away'.

(c) To form first and third-person imperatives, e.g. *Sentémonos* 'Let's sit down', *Que entre* 'Let him come in'.

The imperative is discussed in detail in Chapter 17.

16.15.2 Subjunctive to express wishes

The verb is usually preceded by *ojalá* or by *quién. Así*, used jokingly, parodies a typical gipsy curse and is frequently heard in colloquial language (at least in Spain):

<i>¡Ojalá nos toquen las quinielas!</i>	Let's only hope we win the pools!
<i>Ojalá no se equivoquen, señora</i> (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)	I hope they're not mistaken, Señora
<i>¡Quién fuera millonario!</i>	If only I were a millionaire!

(*Quién* in this expression should not be confused with the word meaning 'who'.)

<i>¡Dios se lo pague!</i>	May God repay you!
<i>¡Así se te pegue mi catarro!</i>	I hope you get my cold!

There is also a less common expression with the same meaning as *ojalá*:

(<i>Así fueran como tú todas las mujeres . . .</i>)	If only all women were like you . . .
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16.15.3 Subjunctive in some common set phrases

(a) *O sea que* 'in other words':

<i>Ha dicho que tiene que trabajar, o sea que no quiere venir</i>	He said he had to work, in other words he doesn't want to come
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(b) In the phrases *que yo sepa/que yo recuerde*:

<i>Que yo recuerde es la primera vez que le he visto</i>	As far as I remember it's the first time I've seen him
<i>—¿Ha llegado Pepe? —No, que yo sepa/por lo que yo sé</i>	'Has Pepe arrived?' 'Not as far as I know'
<i>Que se sepa nadie lo ha hecho antes</i>	As far as anybody knows, it hasn't been done before

(c) In a few set phrases:

<i>¡Acabáramos!</i>	Now I see what you're getting at!
<i>Otro gallo nos cantara si le hubiéramos/ hubiésemos hecho caso</i>	It would have been another story if we had listened to him
<i>¡Cómo tiras el dinero! Ni que fueras millonario . . .</i>	The way you throw money about anyone would think you're a millionaire

16.16 Tense agreement: subjunctive

Despite the claims of many traditional grammars, there are no rigidly fixed rules of tense agreement between main and subordinate clauses, but the following are by far the most usual combinations:

(a) **Main clause in present indicative**

(1) Present subjunctive:

<i>Me gusta que hable</i>	I like her to talk
<i>Quiero que dejes de fumar</i>	I want you to stop smoking

(2) Perfect subjunctive:

<i>Me encanta que hayas venido</i>	I'm delighted you've come
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(3) Imperfect subjunctive (see note (i)):

Es imposible que lo dijera/dijese It's impossible that he said it

(b) Main clause in future

Present subjunctive or Perfect subjunctive:

Nos contentaremos con que terminen/hayan terminado para finales del mes We'll be content with them finishing by the end of the month

(c) Main clause in conditional or conditional perfect

Imperfect subjunctive:

Nos contentaríamos con que terminaran/terminasen para finales del mes We'd be content with them finishing by the end of the month
Yo habría preferido que se pintara/pintase de negro I'd have preferred it to be painted black

(d) Main clause in perfect (see note (ii))

Present, perfect or imperfect subjunctive:

Te he dicho que te estés quieto I told you to be still
Ha sido un milagro que no te hayan reconocido/reconocieran/reconociesen It was a miracle that they didn't recognise you

(e) Main clause in imperfect, preterite or pluperfect (see notes (iii) and (iv))

(1) Imperfect subjunctive:

La idea era que cobrarais/cobraraís los viernes The idea was that you'd get paid on Fridays
Me sorprendió que fuera/fuese tan alto It surprised me that he was so tall
Yo te había pedido que me prestaras/prestases cien dólares I'd asked you to lend me 100 dollars

(2) Pluperfect subjunctive:

Me sorprendía que hubiera/hubiese protestado I was surprised that he had protested

(f) Main clause in imperative

Present subjunctive:

Díganles que se den prisa Tell them to hurry

Notes

(i) The combination present + imperfect subjunctive or perfect subjunctive occurs when a comment is being made about a past event: *No es cierto que él nos devolviera/devolviese/haya devuelto el dinero* 'It isn't true that he returned the money to us'.

There seems to be little difference between the perfect and imperfect subjunctive in this case, and occasionally the present subjunctive can also be used: *Algunos niegan que Cristóbal Colón fuera/fuese/haya sido/sea el primer descubridor de América* 'Some deny that Christopher Columbus was the first discoverer of America'.

(ii) The perfect (*ha dicho, ha ordenado*, etc.) is strictly speaking classified as a present tense for the purposes of agreement, but the imperfect subjunctive is occasionally used with it when the event in the subordinate clause is also in the past. Compare *Ha dado órdenes de que nos rindamos* 'He's given orders for us to surrender' and *El clima que se está creando ha llevado a que se hablara de intervención del Ejército* (*Cambio16*, Spain; also *hable*) 'The climate that is being created has led to talk of Army intervention'.

(iii) The combination past indicative + present subjunctive is optionally possible when the subordinate clause refers to a timeless or perpetual event: *Dios decretó que las serpientes no tengan/tuvieran/tuviesen patas*¹² 'God decreed that snakes should have no legs'.

(iv) When the subordinate event is in the future and the time of the main verb is the recent past, the present subjunctive is sometimes found in the subordinate clause: *El Gobierno vasco reclamó ayer que se le transfiera el mando efectivo de las fuerzas de seguridad del Estado en el País Vasco (El País)* 'The Basque Government demanded yesterday that effective control over the State security forces in the Basque Country should be transferred to itself'.

Use of the present when both verbs refer to the past is common in popular Latin-American speech but is unacceptable to Peninsular speakers (although examples are increasingly frequent in the media): *El inspector aduanero le pidió a la muchacha que le muestre su casaca (La Prensa, Peru; Spain mostrara/mostrase. In Spain la casaca = 'dress coat')* 'The Customs inspector asked the girl to show him her coat'.

(v) After *como si* 'as if', *igual que* *sillo mismo que si* 'the same as if', the verb is always in the imperfect subjunctive: *Le hablaré como si yo no supieses/supiera hablar bien el castellano* 'I'll talk to him as if I didn't know how to speak Spanish well'.

16.17 The future subjunctive

The forms of the future subjunctive are discussed at 13.1.10.

The future subjunctive is nowadays obsolete in standard Spanish except in a few literary variants of set phrases such as *sea lo que fuere* (more usually *sea lo que sea*) 'whatever it may be', *venga lo que viniere* (usually *venga lo que venga*) 'come what may'.

It is much used in legal documents, printed regulations, charters and similar official documents after formulas of the kind 'a person who . . .':

APUESTA: *Contrato bilateral en el que se acuerda que el que acertare un pronóstico o tuviere razón en una disputa recibirá del perdedor lo pactado* (from a Spanish legal dictionary)

'BET': A bilateral contract whereby it is agreed that a person who makes an accurate forecast or wins an argument shall receive the amount agreed from the loser

It occasionally appears in flowery language to indicate a very remote possibility:

. . . *lo cual ofrece amplísimas ventajas en la extracción del motor o en reparaciones, caso de que las hubiere* (advertisement, Spain; *hubiera/hubiese* more normal).

. . . which offers very wide advantages when removing the engine or in repair work – if such a thing should ever arise

It is quite common in Latin-American newspaper style in some regions:

. . . *sólo la aplicación de un plan de estrictas medidas, aun cuando éstas resultaren antipopulares, permitirá salir de la actual situación* (*La Nación*, Buenos Aires)

. . . only the application of a plan of strict measures, even if these were unpopular, would permit us to get out of the present situation

Kany, 225, notes examples in written usage from nine American republics.

¹² *Las piernas* is used only of human legs.

17

The imperative

17.1 General remarks

The imperative is used to give orders or to make requests. There are various ways of making an imperative sound less abrupt: in this respect intonation and attitude are as important in Spanish as in any language, and a friendly manner counts for much more than use of formulas like *por favor*, *haga el favor* 'please', which English-speakers constantly use unnecessarily.

Other points to watch are:

(a) All negative imperatives (e.g. 'don't do', 'don't say') are formed with the subjunctive: *Vete* 'Go away', *No te vayas* 'Don't go away'.

(b) For Latin-Americans there is no *vosotros* imperative: *ustedes* is used for both strangers and friends, and even for little children and animals.

17.2 Affirmative forms of the imperative

17.2.1 General

For negative imperatives ('don't do', 'don't say', etc.), see 17.3.

For the affirmative imperative of *estar* 'to be' the pronominal form is always used (at least in Spain): *Estate quieto* 'Sit still'/'Stop running about', *Estense listas para las ocho* 'Be ready by eight'. See 26.6.4 (*estar*) for further discussion.

Addition of a subject pronoun to an imperative, especially in the *tú* and *vosotros* forms, can make an order emphatic and brusque:

¡*Tú* bájate de ahí!

You! Get down from there!

¡*Vosotros* calla(r)os!

You shut up!

17.2.2 The *tú* imperative

The familiar singular imperative (*tú* form) is, with nine exceptions, formed by removing the -s of the second-person singular of the present indicative: *llamas* > *llama*, *lees* > *lee*. The exceptions are:

decir
hacer
*ir*¹
poner

say
do/make
go
put

di
haz
ve (*vete* = 'go away')
pon

¹ For the irregular first-personal plural of *ir*, *vámonos* (and not the expected *vayámonos*), see 17.5.

<i>salir</i>	leave/go out	<i>sal</i>
<i>ser</i>	be	<i>sé</i>
<i>tener</i>	have	<i>ten²</i>
<i>venir</i>	come	<i>ven</i>

The *tú* imperative of *haber* is theoretically *he*, but it is not in use³.

17.2.3 The *vos* imperative

The imperative form corresponding to *vos* (Southern Cone, especially Argentina, and Central America) can usually be found by removing the *-d* from the European *vosotros* form; the final vowel is therefore usually stressed: *tened* > *tené*, *contad* > *contá*, *decid* > *decí*. Pronominal verbs take the pronoun *te*, so the imperative of *lavarse* is *lavate* (stressed on the second *a*; the standard form is *lávate*). Further examples (all from Argentina; the *tú* form is included for comparison):

<i>Decile que pase (Dile que pase)</i>	Tell him to come in
<i>Vení cuando puedas (Ven cuando puedas.</i> See 16.2.8 for the popular Argentine form <i>Vení cuando podás</i>)	Come when you can
<i>Levantate (Levántate)</i>	Get up

For other remarks on *vos* see the item *voseo* in the Index.

17.2.4 The *vosotros* imperative

The familiar European Spanish plural imperative (*vosotros/vosotras*) is formed by replacing the *-r* of the infinitive by *-d*. There are no exceptions:

<i>ser</i>	be	<i>sed</i>
<i>ir</i>	go	<i>id</i>
<i>tener</i>	go	<i>tened</i>
<i>venir</i>	come	<i>venid</i>
<i>cantar</i>	sing	<i>cantad</i>

This form is replaced by the *ustedes* form of the imperative in Latin America except in very formal styles (e.g. liturgical language), but it is in everyday use in Spain.

The *-d* is dropped in the pronominal form: *dad* + *os* = *daos*: *Daos la mano* 'Shake hands'; *lavad* + *os* = *lavaos*: *Lavaos el pelo* 'Wash your hair'. There is one exception: *id* + *os* = *idos* 'go away!' from *irse*, although in everyday speech *iros* is nowadays much more usual.

Note

In informal spoken language in Spain the *vosotros* imperative is commonly replaced by the infinitive: *venid* = *venir*, *id* = *ir*, *daos* = *daros*, *venios* = *veniros*, *Lavaos las manos* 'Wash your hands' = *Lavaros las manos*, etc. Although it apparently has a long history, this construction is still considered slovenly by some speakers, but it is very widespread, e.g. *Tener* (for *tened*) *cuidado con Socorro que ya se ha cargado*

² Note idiomatic uses: *Ténmelo preparado* 'Have it ready for me', *Tenedme al corriente* 'Keep me informed'.

³ As Seco (1992), 219, points out, the nowadays rather old-fashioned literary formula *he aquí*, 'here is . . .'/ 'what follows is . . .' (French *voici* . . .) is not the imperative of *haber*. Examples: *He aquí una imagen de . . .* 'This is an image of . . .', *Henos aquí ante un aspecto de . . .* 'We are here confronted with an aspect of . . .'.

tres matrimonios (E. Arenas, Spain, popular dialogue) 'Watch out for Socorro, she's already messed up three marriages'. Formal styles require the forms in *-d*.

For further remarks on the use of the infinitive as an imperative, see 17.9.

17.2.5 The *usted/ustedes* imperative

The polite pronouns *usted* and *ustedes* have no independent imperative forms: they use the third-person singular or plural present subjunctive endings respectively: *Dígame* 'Tell me', *Tenga* 'Take'/'Have', *Díganme* (*ustedes*), 'Tell (plural) me', *Avancen*⁴ 'Move on'/'Go on', etc.

The plural forms are used for both polite and informal address in Latin America: a Latin-American mother addresses her children as *ustedes*. *Vosotros* forms of the verb are unfamiliar to most Latin Americans.

17.3 Negative forms of the imperative

When an imperative is in the negative form, the imperative forms are replaced by the present subjunctive:

Affirmative imperative

<i>Canta</i>	sing
<i>Vete</i>	go away
(<i>Usted</i>) <i>levántese</i>	stand up
(<i>Vosotros</i>) <i>sentaos</i>	sit down
(<i>Ustedes</i>) <i>dénselo</i>	give it to him/ her/them

Negative imperative

<i>no cantes</i>
<i>no te vayas</i>
<i>no se levante</i>
<i>no os sentéis</i>
<i>no se lo den</i>

Notes

(i) The Argentine *vos* forms obey the same rules and foreign students should use the standard subjunctive forms with them for the reasons explained at 16.2.8: *Levántate* > *No te levantes* (not *No te levantés*).

(ii) Affirmative forms of the imperative are occasionally used in the negative in popular Spanish speech, e.g. ?*No rechistad* 'Don't answer back!' for *No rechistéis*. This should not be imitated.

17.4 Position of object pronouns with the imperative

When an imperative form is used with an object pronoun, the following rules apply:

(a) If the imperative is **affirmative**, the pronouns are attached to the verb in the normal order (shown at 11.12):

(<i>Tú</i>) <i>dame la mano</i>	Hold my hand
(<i>Tú</i>) <i>ponte la chaqueta</i> (Argentina, [<i>vos</i>])	Put your jacket on
<i>ponete el saco</i>	
(<i>Usted</i>) <i>démelo</i>	Give it to me
(<i>Vosotros/las</i>) <i>dádmelo</i>	Give it to me
(<i>Vosotros</i>) <i>despertaos</i> (colloquial)	Wake up
<i>despertaros</i> ; see 17.2.4)	
(<i>Ustedes</i>) <i>dénnoslo</i>	Give it to us

⁴ Spoken Mexican regularly adds *le* to certain common imperatives, e.g. *Aváncenle* 'Move on', *Pásenle* 'Come in', *Ándale* 'Wow!'/'Heavens!'.

(b) If the imperative is **negative**, the pronouns precede it in the normal way (shown at 11.12):

No *me* des la mano
 No *te* pongas la chaqueta
 (Usted) no *me lo* dé
 Vosotros) no *os* quejéis
 (Ustedes) no *se lo* enseñen

Don't hold my hand
 Don't put your jacket on
 Don't give it to me
 Don't complain
 Don't show it to him/her/them

Notes

(i) When a pronoun ending in a vowel is attached to an affirmative *ustedes* imperative, there is a widespread tendency in popular Latin-American speech either to repeat the plural *-n* at the end of the word or to shift it to the end of the word: ?*Levántensen* or ?*Levántesen* (for *Levántense*) 'Get up' ?*Díganselon* or ?*Dígaselon* (for *Díganselo*) 'Tell it to him'.

Kany, 143ff, gives examples from seventeen Latin-American republics, and in some places these forms are heard even in spontaneous educated speech. This construction is unknown in standard European Spanish and is banned from Latin-American written styles.

(ii) In some regions popular European Spanish puts the pronouns before an affirmative imperative verb and uses a redundant pronoun even for a direct object (this construction should not be confused with imperatives preceded by *que*, discussed at 17.6): ?*¡Le dé el juguete al niño!* (for *¡Dele el juguete al niño!*) 'Give the toy to the child!', *Las riegue las plantas* (for *Riegue las plantas*) 'Water the plants'.

This construction is usually stigmatized as uneducated and should not be imitated by foreign students.

17.5 First-person imperatives

The present subjunctive can be used to make a first-person imperative, e.g. 'let's go!', 'let's get up'. If the verb is pronominal, the final *-s* is dropped before adding *-nos*:

Empecemos
Levantémonos
Preparémonos
Asegurémonos primero de la verdad de los hechos
 No nos *enfademos* (Lat. Am. *No nos enojemos*)

Let's get started
 Let's get up
 Let's prepare ourselves
 Let us first assure ourselves of the truth of the facts
 Don't let's get angry

With the exception of *vámonos* 'let's go', informal spoken language tends to avoid this construction. This is usually done by using *ir a* or sometimes simply *a* and an infinitive, e.g. *Vamos a sentarnos* 'Let's sit down', *Bueno, a levantarse* 'OK, let's get up' (note third-person pronoun), *Vamos a verlo/A ver* 'Let's have a look'/'Let's see'. Thus *No nos enfademos* 'Let's not get angry' may be expressed by *No vale la pena enfadarse*, *No nos vamos a enfadar*, *No vamos a enfadarnos*. However, *No nos enfademos* is also acceptable in spoken language.

Note

Ir forms its first-person plural imperative irregularly: *Vamos, Vámonos* 'Let's go'. The expected form *Vayámonos* is nowadays virtually extinct and *Vayamos* is used as an imperative only in set phrases, e.g. *Vayamos al grano* 'Let's get to the point'.

17.6 Third-person imperatives

Third-person imperative forms consisting of *que* + subjunctive are common. They are usually translatable by some formula like 'Let him/her/them . . .', 'Tell him/her/them to . . .':

—*Que llaman preguntando por su marido.*
 —*Pues que le/lo llamen a la oficina*
Que nos cuente qué política económica
querría que hiciéramos (Felipe González in
El País)
Que pasen
Que ella los bañara, los vistiera, oyera sus
preguntas, los enseñara a rezar y a creer en
algo (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)

'There's a phone call for your husband.'
 'Then let them call him at his office'
 Let him tell us what economic policy
 he'd like us to apply (lit 'make')

Let them come in/tell them to come in
 [As far as I was concerned] let her
 bathe them, clothe them, listen to their
 questions, teach them to pray and
 believe in something

See 33.4 for further remarks on the use of the conjunction *que*.

Note

Third-person imperatives without *que* are found in set phrases: *¡Dios nos coja confesados!* (archaic or humorous) 'Good God!'/ 'Heavens above!' (lit. 'May God take us after we've confessed!'), *¡Sálvese quien pueda!* 'Everyone for himself!' (lit. 'Save him/herself he/she who can').

17.7 First and second-person imperatives preceded by *que*

First and second-person imperatives can also be preceded by *que*. This makes the imperative more insistent or emphatic:

¡Que tengas un buen fin de semana!
¡Que no perdáis el dinero!
¡Que se diviertan!

Have a good week-end!
 Don't lose the money!
 Have a good time! (*ustedes*)

17.8 Impersonal imperatives

It is possible to form an imperative with impersonal *se*, the resulting construction having no exact equivalent in English. It is much used in formal written Spanish to give instructions without addressing the reader directly:

Rellénese en mayúsculas

Fill out in capital letters (lit. 'let it be filled out . . .')

Cuézanse las patatas durante 15 minutos,
córtense en rodajitas, déjense enfriar y
cúbranse con mayonesa

Boil the potatoes for 15 minutes, cut
 into slices, leave to cool and cover with
 mayonnaise

As the last example shows, the verb agrees in number with the logical object of the verb (in this case with *patatas*).

17.9 The infinitive used as an imperative

The infinitive can sometimes be used as an imperative.

(a) In spoken European Spanish as a familiar replacement for the standard affirmative *vosotros* imperative ending in *-d*. This is discussed in the note to 17.2.4.

(b) The infinitive may be used a brief, impersonal imperative, useful for notices and instructions to the reader.

This use of the infinitive is stylistically controversial. Some grammarians reject the use of the infinitive for affirmative commands and admit only negative forms like *No fumar* 'No smoking', *No tocar* 'Don't touch', *No fijar carteles* 'No bill-sticking', *No asomarse a la ventanilla* 'Do not lean out of the window'. Such negative forms are nowadays seen everywhere in Spain and Mexico (and no doubt elsewhere) although they seem to be a recent development; one used to say *Prohibido fumar*, etc.

As far as the affirmative forms are concerned, María Moliner says that an imperative like *Callarse todos* for *Cállense todos* 'Everybody be quiet'/'Be quiet all of you' is not acceptable in careful language. Nevertheless, the form is spreading.

<i>No aparcar delante de las puertas (no aparquen . . .)</i>	No parking in front of doors
<i>Poner en una cacerola la cebolla picada en trozos grandes (Spanish Cookery book: póngase . . .)</i>	Put the roughly chopped onion in a saucepan
<i>Descolgar y esperar. Percibirá una señal acústica continua y uniforme. No demorar el marcar (instructions in Spanish phone book)</i>	Lift receiver and wait. You will hear a continuous even tone. Do not delay before dialling
<i>Le gustaba su marido. Adivinar la razón, porque él era espantoso (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)</i>	She liked her husband, God knows why (lit. 'guess why'), because he was ghastly

Note

Haber plus the past participle is often used to make a sarcastic or withering imperative: —*Me arrepiento de haberla llamado*. —*Bueno, no haberlo hecho . . .* "I regret ringing her." "Well, we shouldn't have done it, should we?"

(c) With the preposition *a*, the infinitive may be used to give orders in informal styles:

— <i>Lo he hecho mal.</i>	'I've done it wrong'.
— <i>Bueno, a hacerlo bien la segunda vez</i> (tends to sound uneducated without <i>a</i>)	'Well do it right the second time'
<i>¡Todos a callar!</i>	Be quiet everybody!
<i>¡A dormir inmediatamente!</i>	Go to sleep right now!

This type of imperative may sometimes include the speaker: *Bueno, ahora a trabajar* 'Okay, now let's get to work'.

Note

In Spain an infinitive is nowadays often used to introduce the last point in radio or TV news items. This is no doubt not an imperative but an abbreviation of some phrase like *Sólo/Solo nos queda . . .* or *Solo/Sólo falta . . .* 'All that remains is to . . .': *Y finalmente, añadir que ésta no es la primera vez que el autor recibe un importante premio literario* 'And finally, let's add/we should add that this isn't the first time that the author has received an important literary prize'.

17.10 The present indicative used as an imperative

The present indicative is sometimes used as an imperative in speech, just as in English, e.g. 'You're getting up right now and going to school'. In both

languages this tends to be a no-nonsense imperative and the effect may be brusque to the point of rudeness:

De acuerdo. No te guardo el sitio para mañana, pero pasado me haces dos páginas (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain, dialogue)

Okay. I won't keep the space for you tomorrow, but the day after tomorrow you're doing two pages for me (editor to journalist)

Nomás que oscurezca te vas por la carretera y tiras en una barranca el cuerpo de una muchacha que se murió (J. Ibarguengoitia, Mexico, dialogue; *nomás que* = *en cuanto* or *nada más* . . . in Spain)
Si quieres, me llamas mañana

As soon as it gets dark, you go down the road and you throw the body of a girl who died into a ravine

If you want to, call me tomorrow

17.11 Ways of mellowing the imperative

The Spanish imperative can sound more like an order than a polite request, especially if one gets the intonation wrong. There are numerous ways of making a request sound friendly, although in any language a politely worded request can still sound rude if the intonation is abrupt or irritable.

Some of the ways of making a request sound more mellow are:

(a) Use the conditional or imperfect of *poder*.

¿Podrían/Podían hacer menos ruido (por favor)?

Would you mind making less noise?/Could you make less noise?

(b) Use *querer*. The conditional makes the imperative even milder:

¿Quieres decirme la verdad?
¿Querías (hacerme el favor de) darle un recado a Pedro?

Would you mind telling me the truth?
Would you mind giving a message to Pedro?

The phrases *Quieres/Querías/Quiere usted hacerme el favor* are very common in everyday Spanish.

(c) Use the phrase *a ver* 'let's see . . . '.

A ver si vienes a verme más a menudo
A ver si me devuelves el dinero que te presté

Try and come and see me more often
Perhaps you could give me back the money I lent you

(d) Turn the request into a question.

¿Me pone con el 261-84-50 (por favor)?⁵

Can you connect me to 261 8450 please?

(e) In Spain, use *tú* instead of *usted*.

Dame una cerveza

Give me a beer (friendly tone)

This is very widespread in Spain and appropriate between young people (say under thirty) even when they are strangers, but it sounds over-familiar when said to older persons or to people in authority. In Latin America *tú* is used much less frequently between strangers.

⁵ See 10.17 for how to say telephone numbers in Spanish.

(f) Put a direct object noun in the diminutive.

This is a common way of making a request sound friendly. Compare *Déme una barra de pan* 'Give me a loaf of bread' and *Deme una **barrita** de pan* 'I'll just take a loaf of bread, please'. The diminutive does not necessarily imply smallness in this construction; it simply makes the tone warmer (see 38.2.2).

(g) Add some tag like *¿eh?*, *¿puedes?*

*Vamos al cine, ¿quieres?! ¿vale?*⁶
No chillas, ¿eh?

Let's go the cinema, okay?
 Stop screaming

17.12 Miscellaneous imperative constructions

Oye/Oiga (usted) (por favor)

Excuse me!, Pardon me! (lit. 'hear!')

No lo vuelvas a hacer/No vuelvas a hacerlo

Don't do it again

Mira lo que he comprado

Look what I have bought

Fíjate lo que me ha pasado

Look what has happened to me

*Imagínate qué disgusto*⁷

Imagine how upset I was (lit. 'imagine what displeasure')

Trae que te lleve la bolsa (colloquial, Spain only?)

Let me carry your bag

Trae aquí (colloquial, Spain only?)

Give it here/Let me take it

No se te ocurra hacer eso

Don't even think of doing that

No dejes de llamarme/No se te olvide llamarme

Don't forget to call me

Vete a saber

Goodness knows/Heaven knows why

No me digas (incredulous tone)

You don't say!

Note

English allows passive imperatives (normally only in the negative): 'Don't be scared by him'. A different solution must be found in Spanish: *No te dejes engañar por su apariencia* 'Don't be deceived by his looks', *No dejes que te hagan cantar a la fuerza* 'Don't be bullied into singing', *No dejes que te mangoneen/No te dejes mangonear* 'Don't let yourself be pushed around'.

⁶ The constant use of *vale* 'okay', 'right', is said by Latin-Americans to be typical of European Spanish.

⁷ *El disgusto* 'upset'/'displeasure'; *el asco* 'disgust'.

18

The infinitive

18.1 Summary

Spanish infinitives end in *-ar*, *-er* or *-ir*. In a few infinitives, e.g. *freír*, *reír*, *sonreír*, the vowel bears an accent. These are listed at 13.1.4f.

The Spanish infinitive cannot in itself express number, mood, time or person (this latter fact should be remembered by students of Portuguese). It is also sometimes ambiguous as to voice, i.e. it can be passive in meaning, e.g. *tres cartas sin terminar* 'three unfinished letters' (lit. 'three letters without finishing').

The infinitive may act as a verb or noun, and in the latter case it is masculine singular: *Fumar es malo para la salud* 'Smoking is bad for the health'. This kind of English sentence must not be translated using the Spanish gerund: **Fumando es malo para la salud* is emphatically not Spanish.

Like the gerund, the infinitive often takes suffixed personal pronouns, e.g. *antes de hacerlo* 'before doing it', cf. French *avant de le faire*. When the infinitive is governed by a verb, position of the pronouns may in some cases be optional with variable stylistic effects, as in *quiero verlo* and *lo quiero ver* 'I want to see it'. This topic is discussed at 11.14.4 (Personal pronouns) and below at 18.2.3.

For the use of the infinitive as an imperative see 17.9.

18.2 Infinitive governed by a verb

This section refers to constructions like *Sabe nadar* 'He can swim', *Te desafío a hacerlo* 'I challenge you to do it', etc.

These constructions have many parallels in English, although there are some surprises and Spanish is free of the complication raised by the unpredictable choice between the infinitive and the *-ing* form, cf. 'He claimed to have done it' = *Pretendía haberlo hecho* and 'He remembered having done it' = *Se acordaba de haberlo hecho*.

18.2.1 Co-referential constructions

If the subject of a main clause and of a subordinate clause are co-referential, i.e. they refer to the same person or thing, the verb in the subordinate clause may be replaced by an infinitive. Compare the following sentences:

Él quiere que lo haga

He wants him/her (someone else) to do it
(not co-referential)

Él quiere hacerlo

He wants to do it (co-referential)

Prefiero que tú lo abras
Prefiero abrirlo yo mismo

I prefer you to open it
 I prefer to open it myself

Constantly recurring verbs that require the infinitive are *poder* 'to be able', *saber* 'to know how to', *deber* 'must', *soler* 'to be accustomed to', *tener que* 'to have to', *hay que* 'it is necessary to'. Modal auxiliary verbs like *poder*, *deber*, *saber*, *haber* are discussed further in Chapter 21.

In some cases both languages optionally allow replacement of the finite verb by a non-finite form, and the infinitive (or the English *-ing* form) is unambiguously co-referential in the third-person:

Desmintieron que hubieran/hubiesen lanzado el misil

They denied that they'd launched the missile (i.e. they themselves or someone else)

Desmintieron haber lanzado el misil

They denied **having launched** the missile

Reconozco que lo hice

I recognise I did it

Reconozco haberlo hecho

I recognise having done it

Afirmaba que él lo hizo

He claimed he did it (himself or someone else)

Afirmaba haberlo hecho

He claimed to have done it

Recuerdo que lo compré

I remember I bought it

Recuerdo haberlo comprado

I remember having bought it

With some verbs Spanish optionally allows an infinitive construction where English does not allow it or the *-ing* form. See the next section for examples.

18.2.2 Infinitive construction with certain verbs

Spanish allows an infinitive construction with a number of verbs of saying, believing, affirming, etc., a construction which may seem bizarre to English-speakers (one cannot say *'He says to be ill' for 'He says he's ill').

The infinitive construction has the advantage of being co-referential, i.e. it eliminates the ambiguity of *Dice que lo sabe* 'He says (s)he knows it', which may refer to a fourth person. Nevertheless, the ambiguous construction with *que* is much more frequently seen. Compare:

Dice estar enfermo

He says he (i.e. himself) is ill

Dice que está enfermo

He says he is ill/(US) 'sick' (himself or someone else)

Further examples:

Dijo llamarse Simón . . . tener 42 años, ser casado, mexicano y estar radicado en el Salto de la Tuxpana (J. Ibargüengoitia, Mexico; the text imitates official language)

He said he was called Simón, was 42, married, Mexican and lived in Salto de la Tuxpana

Creo tener razón

I think I'm right

Creo que tengo razón

I think I'm right

Había creído volverse loco, pensado en matarse (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)

He had imagined he was going mad, thought about killing himself

*Dudo poder hacerlo/Dudo que pueda hacerlo*¹

I doubt I can do it

. . . la información . . . revela ser falsa

the information turns out to be false

(C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue)

¹ The infinitive is particularly common after *dudar* + *poder* 'to doubt one is able to . . .': *Dudo poder hacerlo* 'I doubt I can do it'. However, it is not used elsewhere/after *dudar que* when the latter would require the subjunctive: *Dudo que yo sea tan inteligente como ella dice* 'I doubt I'm as intelligent as she says', but not **Dudo ser tan inteligente como ella dice*.

Note

In written language an infinitive may appear in relative clauses when the subjects refer to different things and the clause includes a verb of saying or believing. This avoids the use of two *ques*: *las tres muchachas, que él creía ser hijas de don Mateo* (rather than *que él creía que eran . . .*) 'the three girls, whom he believed to be the daughters of Don Mateo'.

18.2.3 Verbs followed by the infinitive

The following list shows some of the more common verbs that can be followed by an infinitive. Common French equivalents are supplied as a reminder to students of that language to avoid all-too-frequent blunders like **Se acercó de él* for *Se acercó a él* (French *Il s'est approché de lui*).

Verbs (+ prepositions) followed by infinitive

(verbs marked * allow pronoun shifting. See note (i))

<i>abstenerse de</i>	refrain from
* <i>acabar de: acabo de verla</i>	'I've just seen her'
<i>acercarse a</i>	approach (Fr. <i>s'approcher de</i>)
* <i>acertar a</i>	manage to/succeed
* <i>aconsejar</i>	advise (Fr. <i>conseiller de</i>)
* <i>acordar</i>	agree to
<i>acordarse de</i>	remember (cf. <i>recordar</i>)
* <i>acostumbrar a</i>	be in the habit of
<i>acusar de</i>	accuse of
<i>afirmar</i>	claim/state
* <i>alcanzar a</i>	manage to: <i>Es todo lo que alcancé a ver</i> 'It's all I managed to see'
<i>amenazar</i>	threaten to (Fr. <i>menacer de</i>): <i>amenazó matarle</i> or <i>con matarle</i>
* <i>anhelar</i>	long to
<i>animar a</i>	encourage to
* <i>ansiar</i>	long to
* <i>aparentar</i>	seem to
* <i>aprender a</i>	learn to
<i>arrepentirse de</i>	regret/repent
* <i>asegurar</i>	assure
<i>atreverse a</i>	dare to
<i>autorizar a</i>	authorize to
<i>avergonzarse de</i>	be ashamed of
* <i>ayudar a</i>	help to
<i>bajar a</i>	go down to
<i>buscar</i>	seek to (Fr. <i>chercher à</i>)
<i>cansarse de</i>	tire of
* <i>cesar de</i>	cease from
* <i>comenzar a</i>	begin to
<i>comprometerse a</i>	undertake to
<i>comunicar</i>	announce/communicate
<i>conceder</i>	concede to
<i>condenar a</i>	condemn to
<i>conducir a</i>	lead to
* <i>confesar</i>	confess
* <i>conseguir</i>	succeed in
<i>consentir en</i>	consent to (Fr. <i>consentir à</i>)
<i>consistir en</i>	consist of
<i>contribuir a</i>	contribute to
<i>convenir en</i>	agree to

<i>convidar a</i>	invite to
* <i>creer</i>	believe
<i>cuidar de</i>	take care to
<i>deber</i>	must (see 21.3)
* <i>decidir</i>	decide to (Fr. <i>décider de</i>)
<i>decir</i>	say
<i>declarar</i>	declare
* <i>dejar</i>	let/allow: <i>le dejó hacerlo</i> or <i>se lo dejó hacer</i> 'he let her do it'
* <i>dejar de</i>	leave off
* <i>demostrar</i>	demonstrate
<i>desafiar a</i>	challenge to (Fr. <i>défier de</i>)
* <i>desear</i>	desire/wish to
<i>desesperar de</i>	despair of
<i>dignarse</i>	deign to
<i>disponerse a</i>	get ready to
<i>disuadir de</i>	dissuade from
<i>divertirse en</i>	amuse oneself by (usually with gerund; Fr. <i>s'amuser à</i>)
<i>dudar en</i>	hesitate over (Fr. <i>hésiter à</i>)
<i>echar(se) a</i>	begin to
<i>empeñarse en</i>	insist on
* <i>empezar a</i>	begin to
<i>encargarse de</i>	take charge of
* <i>enseñar a</i>	show how to/teach
<i>esforzarse por</i>	strive to
* <i>esperar</i>	hope/expect/wait
* <i>evitar</i>	avoid (Fr. <i>éviter de</i>)
<i>excitar a</i>	excite to
<i>figurarse</i>	imagine
<i> fingir</i>	pretend to
* <i>forzar a</i>	force to
<i>guardarse de</i>	take care not to
<i>gustar de</i>	like to (but usually <i>Le gusta fumar</i> , etc.)
<i>habituarse a</i>	get used to
* <i>hacer</i>	make e.g. <i>La hizo callar</i> , 'He made her keep quiet'
<i>hartarse de</i>	tire of/have enough of
<i>imaginar</i>	imagine
* <i>impedir</i>	prevent from (Fr. <i>défendre de</i>)
<i>impulsar a</i>	urge on to
<i>incitar a</i>	incite to
<i>inclinarse a</i>	incline to
<i>inducir a</i>	induce/persuade to
<i>insistir en</i>	insist on (Fr. <i>insister sur</i>)
<i>instar a</i>	urge to
* <i>intentar</i>	try to
<i>interesarse en (or por)</i>	interest in (Fr. <i>s'intéresser à</i>)
<i>invitar a</i>	invite to
<i>jactarse de</i>	boast of
* <i>jurar</i>	swear to
<i>juzgar</i>	judge (but usually with <i>que . . .</i>)
<i>limitarse a</i>	limit oneself to
<i>luchar por</i>	struggle to
* <i>llegar a</i>	e.g. <i>Incluso llegó a robar dinero</i> 'He even went so far as to steal money'
<i>llevar a</i>	lead to
* <i>lograr</i>	succeed in
* <i>mandar</i>	order to (Fr. <i>ordonner de</i>)

<i>mandar a</i>	send to
<i>manifestar</i>	state/declare
<i>maravillarse de</i>	marvel at
<i>merecer</i>	deserve to
<i>meterse a</i>	start to
<i>mover a</i>	move to
* <i>necesitar</i>	need to
<i>negar</i>	deny (<i>negarse a</i> 'refuse to')
* <i>obligar a</i>	oblige to (Fr. <i>obliger de</i>)
<i>obstinarse en</i>	insist obstinately on
<i>ofrecer</i>	offer
* <i>oír</i>	hear (see 20.7)
<i>olvidar,</i> <i>olvidarse de, olvidársele</i>	forget; infinitive <i>olvidar</i> alone is uncommon with the infinitive; see 26.6.4
<i>optar</i> (usually <i>optar por</i>)	opt to/for
* <i>ordenar</i>	order to (Fr. <i>ordonner de</i>)
* <i>parar de</i>	stop
* <i>parecer</i>	seem to
* <i>pasar a</i>	go on to
<i>pasar de</i>	to be uninterested in
<i>pedir</i>	ask to (Fr. <i>demander à , demander de</i>)
* <i>pensar</i>	<i>pienso hacerlo</i> 'I plan to do it'
<i>pensaban en hacerlo</i>	'They were thinking about doing it'
* <i>permitir</i>	allow to (Fr. <i>permettre de</i>)
<i>persistir en</i>	persist in
<i>persuadir a</i>	persuade to (Fr. <i>persuader quelqu'un de faire . . .</i>)
* <i>poder</i>	be able to
<i>precipitarse a</i>	rush to
* <i>preferir</i>	prefer to
<i>prepararse a</i>	get ready to
<i>presumir de</i>	(approx.) boast about
* <i>pretender</i>	claim to
* <i>procurar</i>	try hard to
* <i>prohibir</i>	prohibit from (Fr. <i>défendre de</i>)
* <i>prometer</i>	promise to (Fr. <i>promettre de</i>)
<i>quedar en</i>	agree to
* <i>querer</i>	want to (see 21.5)
* <i>recordar</i>	remember to ²
* <i>rehusar</i>	refuse to (Fr. <i>refuser de</i>)
* <i>renunciar a</i>	renounce
<i>resignarse a</i>	resign oneself to
<i>resistirse a</i>	resist
* <i>resolver</i>	resolve to (Fr. <i>résoudre de</i>)
* <i>saber</i>	know how to (see 21.2)
<i>sentir</i>	regret/be sorry for
* <i>soler: solía hacerlo</i>	'He habitually did it' (see 21.6)
* <i>solicitar</i>	apply to
<i>soñar con</i>	dream of (Fr. <i>songer à , rêver de</i>)
<i>tardar en</i>	be late in/be a long time in (Fr. <i>tarder à</i>)
* <i>temer</i>	fear to

² The construction is *Me acuerdo de haberla visto* or *Recuerdo haberla visto* 'I remember seeing her'.

Recordarse can only mean 'to remember oneself', as in *Me recuerdo como un niño muy tímido* 'I remember myself as a very timid child'. However *recordarse* for 'to remember' is common in familiar Latin-American speech although it is avoided in careful styles.

* <i>tender a</i>	tend to
* <i>terminar de</i>	finish
* <i>tratar de</i>	try to
<i>vacilar en</i>	hesitate over
<i>venir de</i>	come from
* <i>ver</i>	see (see 20.7)
* <i>volver a (hacer)</i>	(do) again (see 32.6a)

Notes

(i) Verbs preceded by * allow pronoun shifting, i.e. one can say *Acabo de hacerlo* or *Lo acabo de hacer*, *Pienso mudarme mañana* 'I'm thinking of moving tomorrow' or *Me pienso mudar mañana*. Doubtful verbs, e.g. *fingir*, *afirmar*, are not marked. Pronoun shifting is discussed in detail at 11.14.4.

(ii) Verbs of motion, e.g. *salir*, *bajar*, *ir*, *volver*, *entrar*, *acercar(se)*, always take *a* before an infinitive: *Bajó a hablar con ella* 'He went down to talk to her', *Entraron a saludar al profesor* 'They went in to say hello to the teacher', etc.

(iii) For the use of the infinitive as a noun, e.g. *Es bueno jugar al tenis* 'It's good to play tennis'/'Playing tennis is good', see 18.6.

18.2.4 Verbs of permitting and forbidding

These, and certain other verbs, allow either a subjunctive or an infinitive construction. They are discussed under the subjunctive at 16.5.2.

It is worth repeating here that when used with the infinitive they can appear without an object or with only one object in Spanish, but not in English: *Esto prohíbe pensar que . . .* 'This prohibits us/one from thinking that . . . '.

18.2.5 Infinitive after verbs of perception

The infinitive is used after verbs like *ver*, *oír*, to denote a completed action. An incomplete action is indicated by the gerund. English makes the same distinction: compare 'I saw him smoke a cigar' and 'I saw him smoking a cigar'. See 20.7 for more examples:

<i>Te vi entrar</i>	I saw you come in
<i>Se lo oí hacer</i>	I heard her do it
<i>Te lo vi firmar</i>	I saw you sign it
<i>Vimos llegar el avión</i> (note word order)	We saw the plane arrive

Note

A passive may be required in the English translation: *Nunca la oí nombrar* 'I've never heard her mentioned'.

18.3 Infinitive after subordinators

An infinitive construction is possible after many subordinators, e.g. *hasta* 'until', *con tal de* 'provided that', *en caso de* 'in the event that', *a pesar de* 'despite', *para* 'in order to', *con el objeto de* 'with the aim of' and other subordinators of purpose, *nada más* 'as soon as', *por* 'by', *sin* 'without', *antes de* 'before', *después de* 'after', etc.

Foreign students should apply the rule of co-referentiality: the infinitive should be used only if the subject of the subordinate verb is the same as the main verb's, as in *Lo hice antes de salir* 'I did it before I went out/before going out'.

If the subjects are not co-referential, the subjunctive or indicative must be used, the choice being determined by the rules laid out 16.12.1. Compare

Lo haré nada más acabar esto 'I'll do it as soon as I've finished this' and *Lo haré nada más que acabe esto* 'I'll do it as soon as this finishes'. The latter sentence could also mean 'as soon as I finish this', but a third-person interpretation comes most readily to mind when the subjunctive is used. Further examples:

<i>Lo haré después de comer</i>	I'll do it after I've had lunch
<i>Lo haré después de que hayáis comido</i>	I'll do it after you've had lunch
<i>Entré sin verte</i>	I entered without seeing you
<i>Entré sin que tú me vieras/vieses</i>	I entered without you seeing me
<i>Se fue antes de contestar</i>	He left before he answered
<i>Se fue antes de que yo contestase/contestara</i>	He left before I answered
<i>Enfermó (Lat. Am. Se enfermó) por no comer</i>	He fell ill/(US) 'sick' from not eating
<i>Se enfadó al enterarse</i>	He got angry when he found out
<i>Se hace camino al andar (Antonio Machado, Spain)</i>	One makes one's path as one goes along

Spontaneous language often uses an infinitive construction with these subordinators, and also in the construction *al* + infinitive 'on . . . -ing', even when the subjects are not co-referential. Thus *me di cuenta al llegar* (co-referential) 'I realized on arriving' is correct, ?*Me di cuenta al llegar Juan* literally '?I realized on Juan's arriving' (not co-referential) is a frequent but dubious way of saying *me di cuenta cuando llegó Juan* 'I realized when Juan arrived'. *Lo terminé antes de que tú llegases/llegaras* 'I finished before you arrived' is correct, ?*Lo terminé antes de llegar tú* is constantly heard in informal speech but is suspect. Use of the infinitive when the subjects are different is best avoided by foreigners, since native speakers often on reflection reject such utterances as badly formed. Examples:

? <i>Le miraba sin él darse cuenta (J. Marsé, dialogue: sin que él se diese/diera cuenta)</i>	He watched him without him realizing
? <i>¿Te voy a ver antes de irte? (Spanish informant, i.e. antes de que te vayas)</i>	Am I going to see you before you go?
? <i>Llegamos antes de empezar la película (antes de que empezara/empezase . . .)</i>	We arrived before the film started
? <i>Es decir que había comprado marfil para usted vender (Vindicación de Cuba, Cuba, dialogue, for . . . para que usted lo vendiera/vendiese)</i>	In other words he had bought ivory for you to sell
? <i>¿Me podés comprar postales para mandar yo? (Argentine informant, i.e. para que yo las mande; Spain puedes for podés)</i>	Could you buy me some post-cards for me to send?

18.4 Replacement of finite forms by the infinitive

The infinitive may be used to give a brief answer a question:

— <i>¿Qué hacemos?</i>	'What do we do?'
— <i>Esperar</i>	'Wait'
— <i>¿Qué me aconsejas?</i>	'What do you advise me?'
— <i>No decir nada</i>	'Say nothing'
— <i>¿Pero se puede saber qué está usted haciendo?</i>	'But do you mind telling me what you're doing?'
— <i>¡Sacar a mi mujer! (E. Arenas, Spain, dialogue)</i>	'Getting my wife out!'

18.5 Infinitive: passive or active?

The Spanish infinitive sometimes acquires a passive meaning especially after *sin*, *por*, *a* and *para*:

<i>Esto aún está por ver una cerveza sin abrir casas a medio construir un movimiento sin organizar Los republicanos llegan a la convención con las tácticas electorales sin decidir (El País, Spain) En su recámara había cuatro maletas a medio hacer (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue; recámara = dormitorio in Spain) . . . trabajos para hacer por el estudiante</i>	This is still to be seen an unopened beer half-built houses an unorganized movement the Republicans are arriving at the Convention with their electoral tactics undecided In her bedroom there were four half- packed suitcases work to be done (lit. 'to do') by the student
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18.6 Infinitive as a noun

The infinitive may function as a noun, in which case it is always masculine and usually singular:

<i>Mañana me toca lavar el coche Votar Comunista es votar contra el paro (election poster) mejor no hacerlo Odio ordenar un atolondrado ir y venir . . . el envejecer despacio entre laureles marchitos y ciénagas (G. García Márquez, Colombia)</i>	It's my turn to wash the car tomorrow To vote Communist is to vote against unemployment best not do it I hate sorting/tidying a mad coming and going . . . ageing slowly among withered laurels and swamps
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18.7 Definite articles before the infinitive

The definite article is nowadays not often used with the infinitive except:
(a) In the common construction *al* + infinitive.

<i>Al entrar, se dio cuenta de que no había nadie Tómese una pastilla al acostarse</i>	On entering he realized no one was there Take a pill on going to bed
--	---

(b) When the infinitive is qualified by an adjective or by a noun phrase joined to the infinitive by *de*.

<i>Oyó el agitado girar de una cucharilla contra un vaso (L. Goytisolo, Spain) con el andar de los años</i>	He heard the agitated grating of a teaspoon against a glass as the years passed by
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(c) When the infinitive refers to some specific or personal action rather than to a general statement. Compare *Vivir separados cuesta más* 'Living apart costs more' (general statement) and *El vivir separados fue cosa de él* 'Living apart was his idea' (specific, personal). Also:

<i>Ayuda mucho dejar de fumar Fue idea del médico el dejar de fumar</i>	It helps to stop smoking Stopping smoking was the doctor's idea
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In other cases, use of the definite article often seems to be optional, although it is much less common in informal styles. The article is, however, quite often retained when the infinitive is the subject of a verb.

In all the following examples the definite article before the infinitive could have been omitted, although in the attributed examples it was in fact used. Omission would make the style slightly less literary:

<i>Paula no pudo evitar (el) reírse</i> (J.J. Plans, Spain)	Paula couldn't help laughing
<i>Odiaban (el) vivir en casa de sus abuelos</i>	They hated living in their grandparents' house
<i>(El) hacer esto le costó mucho trabajo</i>	Doing this cost him a great deal of effort
<i>Esto permite a los robots (el) ser reprogramados para . . .</i>	This allows robots to be re-programmed to . . .

The article is retained in some constructions involving *en*:

<i>La moda en el vestir influye en la moda del maquillaje</i>	Fashion in dressing influences fashion in make-up
<i>Algunos españoles son un poco enfáticos en el hablar</i>	Some Spaniards are rather ponderous in their manner of speaking
<i>Le conocí en el andar</i>	I recognised him from his way of walking

After set verb phrases involving a preposition, the article is omitted:

<i>Hice mal en venir aquí</i>	I did wrong in coming here
<i>Tardaron horas en hacerlo</i>	They took hours to do it
<i>Acabaron por no hablarse con nadie</i>	They ended up not talking to anyone
<i>Tratábamos de contactarla</i>	We were trying to contact her

The indefinite article *un* also occurs before a qualified infinitive:

<i>en un abrir y cerrar de ojos</i>	in the wink of an eye
<i>después de dos años de un agitado avanzar por el camino de la libertad</i>	after two years of agitated progress (lit. 'agitated progressing') along the road to liberty

18.8 Infinitive as an imperative

This subject is discussed in 17.9.

18.9 'Rhetorical' infinitive

The infinitive may be used in rhetorical questions or to express disbelief or bewilderment:

<i>¡Pagar yo cien mil por eso!</i>	What! Me pay 100,000 for that!
<i>¡Enamorarme yo a mis años!</i>	Me fall in love at my age!
<i>Pero, ¿cómo abrirlo sin llave?</i>	But how (on earth) does one open it without a key?

18.10 Adjective + de + infinitive

Students of French must learn the difference between sentences like

<i>Es difícil aprender español</i>	It's difficult to learn Spanish
and	
<i>El español es difícil de aprender</i>	Spanish is difficult to learn

De is not used when the adjective modifies the infinitive itself:

<i>No es fácil creerlo</i>	It isn't easy to believe it
<i>Es increíble pensar que el hombre ha pisado la luna</i>	It's incredible to think that man has walked on the moon
<i>Es imposible comprobar que . . .</i>	It's impossible to prove that . . .

When the adjective does not modify the infinitive but a noun or pronoun (present or implied), *de* is used:

<i>(Eso) es difícil de averiguar (difícil modifies eso)</i>	That's difficult to check
<i>Creo que es cierto, pero es imposible de comprobar</i>	I think it's true, but it's impossible to prove

18.11 Infinitive preceded by *que*

The following construction must be noted – particularly by students of French: cf. *J'ai beaucoup à faire, Je n'ai rien à faire*, etc.:

<i>Tengo mucho que hacer</i>	I've got a lot to do
<i>Voy a comprar algo que para leer</i>	I'm going to buy something to read
<i>Dame algo que para hacer</i>	Give me something to do
<i>Eso nos ha dado bastante que hacer</i>	This has given us enough to do
<i>Te queda mucho que sufrir en este mundo</i>	You've a lot left to suffer in this world

But this construction with *que* cannot be used with verbs of needing, requesting, searching:

<i>Necesito algo para comer</i>	I need something to eat
<i>Quiero algo para beber</i>	I want something to drink
<i>Pidió algo para calmar su dolor de muelas</i>	He asked for something to soothe his toothache
<i>Busco algo para . . .</i>	I'm looking for something to . . .

Note

The construction with *que* must be distinguished from the following similar construction with *qué* 'what'/'anything': *No tengo qué comer* 'I haven't got anything to eat', *No sabemos qué pensar* 'We don't know what to think'.

18.12 *El problema a resolver, un argumento a tomar en cuenta, etc.*

This combination of noun + *a* + infinitive is an increasingly fashionable alternative way of saying 'something that is to be/ought to be done', e.g. . . . *que va a hacerse/que hay que hacer*.

Seco (1992), 5, says that it is a Gallicism reinforced by the influence of English – 'a problem to (be) solve(d)', *un problème à résoudre* – but he welcomes its brevity and points out that it is not strictly equivalent to *por* + infinitive: *cosas por hacer* = 'things still to be done', *cosas a hacer* = 'things to do'.

The Academy's *Esbozo*, 3.11.5, tolerates certain set constructions used in commerce and finance, e.g. *total a pagar* 'total payable', *cantidades a deducir* 'amounts deductible', *asuntos a tratar* 'business pending'/'agenda', but notes that the Academies of all Spanish-speaking countries condemn

such sentences as *Tengo terrenos a vender* 'I've got land to sell' (for *que/para vender*), *personas a convocar* 'people to call/summon' (for *que convocar*), etc.

The construction with *a* is very common in Latin America. For more examples see 35.9.

19

Participles

This chapter discusses past participles, e.g. *hablado* 'spoken', *visto* 'seen', and adjectival or present participles ending in *-ante*, *-(i)ente*, e.g. *perteneciente* 'belonging', *inquietante* 'worrying'.

19.1 Past participle: general

The past participle has several uses:

(a) It is used with *haber* to form the compound tenses of verbs. In this case the participle is invariably in the masculine singular form: *Ha hablado* 'He has spoken', *Yo la he visto* 'I have seen her'. See 14.8 for discussion.

(b) It is occasionally used with *tener* or *llevar* to express the idea of acquisition or accumulation, as in *Tengo compradas las entradas* 'I've bought the entrance tickets', *Llevo tomados tres somníferos* 'I've taken three sleeping tablets'. See 14.8.3 for discussion.

(c) It is used to form the passive: *Fue impresola* 'It was printed', *Fueron observados/observadas* 'They were observed'. The passive is discussed in Chapter 28.

(d) It functions as an adjective, in which case it agrees in number and gender like any adjective: *una exagerada reacción* 'an exaggerated reaction', *un argumento improvisado* 'an improvised argument', *una desesperada tentativa* 'a desperate attempt', etc.

These adjectival participles may, like any other adjective, be converted into nouns by use of an article, demonstrative, numeral or some other word that has the effect of nominalizing adjectives: *un muerto* 'a dead body', *ese herido* 'that wounded person', *¿Qué dirán por su parte los censurados?* 'What will those who have been censured have to say for themselves?', *varios condenados* 'several condemned persons'. Such forms can neatly replace an English relative clause: *Nunca olvidaremos a los desaparecidos* 'We'll never forget those who disappeared', *¿Dónde están los recién llegados?* 'Where are the ones who've just arrived'.

Many words ending in *-ado*, *-ido* are used only as adjectives, e.g. *adecuado* 'appropriate'/'adequate', *desgraciado* 'unhappy', *desmesurado* 'disproportionate', *indiscriminado* 'indiscriminate', *descarado* 'shameless'.

Some past participles have become true adjectives, i.e. they may in appropriate circumstances appear before a noun: *una arriesgada aventura* 'a risky venture', *la controvertida propuesta* 'the controversial proposal', etc. Other past participles remain verbal and may not precede a noun: *un árbol talado* 'a felled

tree', *un periódico quemado* 'a burnt newspaper', *una reunión pospuesta/aplazada* 'a postponed meeting', *un libro impreso* 'a printed book'.

Further examples of participles that may also function as true adjectives are:

<i>alabado</i>	praised	<i>desconocido</i>	unknown
<i>alarmado</i>	alarmed	<i>emocionado</i>	excited/moved
<i>alejado</i>	remote	<i>justificado</i>	justified
<i>elevado</i>	elevated	<i>marcado</i>	marked
<i>debido</i>	due	<i>resignado</i>	resigned
<i>dedicado</i>	dedicated	<i>supuesto</i>	alleged/supposed

and many others.

Such adjectival participles may appear with *ser* without creating a passive sentence: *Su reacción era exagerada* 'His reaction was exaggerated', *Mi llanto era desesperado* 'My weeping was desperate', *Su cara me era desconocida*, 'Her/his face was unknown to me'. Verbal participles form passive sentences when used in the same way: *La ciudad fue destruida* 'The city was destroyed', *Eran perseguidos* 'They were persecuted/pursued'.

In this case it may be possible to make the verbal participle adjectival by using *estar*, e.g. *La ciudad estaba destruida* 'The city was in a state of destruction'. (The difference between *estaba destruido* and the passive with *ser*, *fue destruido*, is discussed at 28.2.5).

19.2 Past participles: forms

19.2.1 Regular and irregular past participles

The past participle is formed in most cases by replacing the *-ar* of an infinitive by *ado*, and *-er* and *-ir* by *-ido*: *hablar/hablado*, *tener/tenido*, *construir/construido*, *ir/lido*, *ser/sido*, etc.

There are a few common irregular past participles:

Infinitive	Past participle
<i>abrir</i>	<i>abierto</i>
<i>absolver</i> (and all verbs in <i>-solver</i>)	<i>absuelto</i>
<i>cubrir</i> (and compounds)	<i>cubierto</i>
<i>decir</i>	<i>dicho</i>
<i>escribir</i> (and compounds e.g. <i>describir</i> , etc.)	<i>escrito</i>
<i>hacer</i>	<i>hecho</i>
<i>morir</i>	<i>muerto</i>
<i>poner</i> (and compounds)	<i>puesto</i>
<i>romper</i>	<i>roto</i>
<i>ver</i> (and compounds)	<i>visto</i>
<i>volver</i> (and compounds)	<i>vuelto</i>

A few have separate adjectival and verbal participles, cf. *Está despierto porque lolle he despertado* 'He's awake because I've woken him'. The following list includes the most important examples.

The bracketed forms in the following list are mentioned by the grammarians but they are virtually never found nowadays:

	Verbal	Adjectival	
<i>absorber</i>	<i>absorbido</i>	<i>absorto</i>	absorbed
<i>bendecir</i>	<i>bendecido</i>	<i>bendito</i>	blessed
<i>confesar</i>	<i>confesado</i>	<i>confeso</i>	confessed
<i>confundir</i>	<i>confundido</i>	<i>confuso</i>	confused
<i>despertar</i>	<i>despertado</i>	<i>despierto</i>	woken up
<i>elegir</i>	<i>elegido</i>	<i>electo</i>	elected
<i>freír</i>	<i>(freído)/frito</i>	<i>frito</i>	fried
<i>imprimir</i>	<i>imprimido</i>	<i>impreso</i>	printed
<i>maldecir</i>	<i>maldecido</i>	<i>maldito</i>	cursed
<i>prender</i>	<i>prendido</i>	<i>preso</i>	pinned on ¹
<i>presumir</i>	<i>presumido</i>	<i>presunto</i>	presumed
<i>proveer</i>	<i>proveído</i>	<i>provisto</i>	equipped with
<i>soltar</i>	<i>soltado</i>	<i>suelto</i>	released
<i>suspender</i>	<i>suspendido</i>	<i>suspense</i>	failed (exams)

19.2.2 Irregular past participles in Latin America

A number of irregular adjectival participle forms are more widely used in Latin America than in Spain.

These forms are scholarly participles that are either obsolete in Spain or used only in set phrases, e.g. *el presidente electo* 'the president elect'. They are regularly used in Latin America not only as adjectives but also in the formation of passives, e.g. *Resultó electo candidato a la presidencia* (A. Mastretta, Mexico) 'He was elected as presidential candidate', Spain *salió elegido*:

	Spain	Lat. Am. adjectival	
<i>convencer</i>	<i>convencido</i>	<i>convicto</i>	convinced
<i>corromper</i>	<i>corrompido</i>	<i>corrupto</i> ²	corrupt
<i>describir</i>	<i>descrito</i>	<i>descripto</i>	described
<i>dividir</i>	<i>dividido</i>	<i>diviso</i>	divided
<i>inscribir</i>	<i>inscrito</i>	<i>inscripto</i>	entered (a written item)
<i>prescribir</i>	<i>prescrito</i>	<i>prescripto</i>	prescribed

Examples:

<i>Ocurre en las regiones antárticas descritas con extraordinaria vividez</i> (J.L. Borges, Argentina, Spain <i>descritas</i>)	It happens in the Antarctic regions described with extraordinary vividness
<i>Incluye todos los shampoos prescritos por médicos</i> (Gente, Argentina; Spain <i>recetados/prescritos</i>)	It includes all the shampoos prescribed by doctors
<i>su apoyo irrestricto</i> (ibid. Spain <i>incondicional</i>)	his unlimited support
<i>. . . escritores que fueron conservadores convictos</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru; in Spain <i>convicto</i> = 'convicted')	writers who were convinced conservatives

Latin-Americans may reject the use of the regular participles in such sentences, but the irregular forms are not accepted by most Peninsular speakers, and certainly not in the formation of the passive.

¹*Prender* has numerous meanings. In Latin America it is often used for 'to switch on' (lights, etc.); Spain *encender*.

² Both *una sociedad corrompida* and *una sociedad corrupta* 'a corrupt society' are said in Spain, the latter being nowadays more frequent.

Note

Muerto is the passive participle of *matar* 'to kill' when applied to human beings: *Su padre fue muerto durante la guerra* 'His father was killed in the war' but *Unos bandidos habían matado a su padre* 'Some bandits had killed his father', *Con el tiempo sería muerto por la Gestapo* (Ernesto Sábato, Argentina, interview) 'He was later to be killed by the Gestapo'.

19.3 Participle clauses

Participle clauses are common in Spanish. These clauses often have exact English counterparts, but slight differences occur between the two languages (see also 31.3.4 for sentences like *Aceptó irritada* 'She accepted irritably'):

Me fui, convencido de que él no sabía nada el alcalde de Barcelona, acompañado del alcalde de Madrid (acompañado por = 'escorted by')

José González, nacido el 23 de marzo —¿Dónde vas? preguntó alarmado

su padre, muerto en 1956 . . .

I left, convinced he knew nothing the mayor of Barcelona, accompanied by the mayor of Madrid

José González, born on 23 March 'Where are you going?', he asked in alarm

His father, who died in 1956 . . .

Absolute participle clauses (i.e. participles that do not depend on another verb in the sentence) are quite common, especially in literary styles. Some absolute participle constructions are stylistically normal, others are rather literary. They can rarely be translated word for word:

Llegados a Madrid, se alojaron en el mejor hotel (see note)

Concluidas las primeras investigaciones, la policía abandonó el lugar de autos

Por fin, transcurridos siete años desde la publicación de su primera novela . . .

Terminada la guerra, muchos ex-combatientes prefirieron no volver a su patria

Después de vendida la casa, nos arrepentimos (from Seco, (1992), 284)

Arrasado el jardín, profanados los cálices y las aras, entraron a caballo los hunos en la biblioteca monástica (J.L. Borges, Argentina, very literary)

Having arrived in Madrid, they stayed at the best hotel

The initial investigations having been concluded, the police left the scene of the crime

At last, seven years having passed since the publication of his first novel . . .

Once the war was over, many ex-combatants preferred not to return to their own country

Once the house was sold, we regretted it

Having demolished the garden and profaned chalices and altars, the Huns rode into the monastery library

Note

Llegar seems to be the only verb of motion that allows this construction. One cannot say **Entrada en el agua se puso a nadar* 'Entering the water she began to swim': *Cuando entró en el agua se puso a nadar*, or **Bajados del tren* for *Cuando bajaron del tren* 'When they got out of the train'.

19.4 Participles in *-ante*, *-iente* or *-ente*

Adjectival present participles may be formed from many, but by no means all verbs. Such participles function like the English adjectival forms in *-ing*: 'Sleeping Beauty' = *La Bella Durmiente*. New coinages are appearing constantly, many of them inspired by English adjectives ending in *-ing*.

Adjectival participles are formed:

-ar conjugation: replace the *-ar* of the infinitive by *-ante*: *alarmar* > *alarmante* 'alarming', *inquietar* > *inquietante* 'worrying'.

-er conjugation: replace the *-er* of the infinitive by *-iente* or, in a few cases, by *-ente*.

-ir conjugation: replace the *-iendo* of the gerund by *-iente* or *-ente*, the choice being unpredictable.

Examples from the *-er* and *-ir* conjugations:

	Gerund	-nte form	
<i>crecer</i>	<i>creciendo</i>	<i>creciente</i>	growing
<i>proceder</i>	<i>procediendo</i>	<i>procedente</i>	proceeding
<i>sorprender</i>	<i>sorprendiendo</i>	<i>sorprendente</i>	surprising
<i>tender</i>	<i>tendiendo</i>	<i>tendente</i>	tending (to)
<i>concernir</i>	<i>concerniendo</i>	<i>concerniente</i>	concerning
<i>conducir</i>	<i>conduciendo</i>	<i>conducente</i>	leading (to)
<i>existir</i>	<i>existiendo</i>	<i>existente</i>	existing/extant
<i>dormir</i>	<i>durmiendo</i>	<i>durmiente</i>	sleeping
<i>herir</i>	<i>hiriendo</i>	<i>hiriente</i>	wounding
<i>producir</i>	<i>produciendo</i>	<i>producente</i>	producing (<i>contra- producente</i> , counter- productive)
<i>reír</i>	<i>riendo</i>	<i>riente</i>	laughing
<i>salir</i>	<i>saliendo</i>	<i>saliente</i>	outgoing, etc.
<i>seguir</i>	<i>siguiendo</i>	<i>siguiente</i>	following
<i>sonreír</i>	<i>sonriendo</i>	<i>sonriente</i>	smiling

There are a few irregular formations:

<i>convencer</i>	<i>convenciendo</i>	<i>convincente</i>	convincing
<i>convenir</i>	<i>conviniendo</i>	<i>conveniente</i>	suitable (not really a participle)
<i>fluir</i>	<i>fuyendo</i>	<i>fluente</i>	flowing/fluent
<i>provenir</i>	<i>proviniendo</i>	<i>proveniente</i>	coming from

Forms in *-nte* cannot be coined from all verbs and should be learnt separately from the dictionary, especially in view of the remark in note (ii). They are often used in written, mainly journalistic style to replace relative clauses in the same way as English participles in *-ing*:

<i>una situación cambiante/estresante</i>	a changing/stressful situation
<i>el ministro saliente</i>	the outgoing minister
<i>condiciones vinculantes (El País, Spain)</i>	binding conditions
<i>resultados sobresalientes</i>	outstanding results
<i>un éxito fulminante</i>	a fulminating success
<i>En 1984 todavía 157.000 personas,</i>	In 1984, 157,000 people belonging to
<i>pertenecientes a diferentes clases sociales</i>	various social classes and originating
<i>y procedentes de lugares muy distintos de</i>	from widely different places, still
<i>nacimiento, votaron . . . (El País)</i>	voted . . .
<i>el millón y medio restante</i>	the remaining 1.5 million

Notes

(i) The gerund in *-ando* or *-iendo* cannot replace the *-nte* form in any of these examples. See 20.3 for discussion.

(ii) It must be emphasized that these participles are formed unpredictably. English speakers often invent non-existent words like **moviente* for 'moving': *piezas movibles*

= 'moving parts', *espectáculo conmovedor* 'moving spectacle'. Compare also *mesa plegable* 'folding table', *agua potable* 'drinking water', *confiado/crédulo* 'confiding', *planta trepadora* = 'climbing plant', *resultados satisfactorios* 'satisfying results', *hechos reveladores* 'revealing facts' and many others.

(iii) Many forms in *-nte* are not strictly speaking participles but non-verbal adjectives, e.g. *brillante* 'shining', *corriente* 'current'/'ordinary', *aparente* 'apparent', *reciente* 'recent', etc.

(iv) With the exception of a few slang or popular words, e.g. *dominanta* 'bossy' (of a woman), *currante* > *curranta* (familiar Peninsular Spanish for 'hard-working'), *atorrante* > *atorranta* 'slacker'/'lay-about', *golfante* > *golfanta* (popular Peninsular Spanish for 'rascal'/'no-good'), neither participles nor adjectives ending in *-nte* have a separate feminine form. However, a few nouns in *-nte* make their feminine with *-nta*. See 1.2.5.

20

The gerund

For the use of the gerund to form the continuous aspect of verbs, e.g. *estoy hablando* 'I'm talking', *está diciendo* 'he's saying', etc. see Chapter 15.

20.1 General

The gerund is invariable in form, but pronouns may sometimes be attached to it: *Estaba esperándolos* or *Los estaba esperando* 'He was waiting for them'. See 11.14.5 for the difference between the two forms.

The Spanish gerund is quite unlike the English *-ing* form, which serves as gerund, present participle, noun and adjective, and also unlike the French form ending in *-ant* which covers the functions of both the Spanish gerund and the participle form in *-ante*, *-(i)ente* (discussed at 19.4).

The Spanish gerund is theoretically a kind of adverb and can therefore properly only modify verbs, but not nouns. ?*Una caja conteniendo libros* 'a box containing books' is therefore bad Spanish since there is no verb; this mistake is very common among English-speakers. See 20.3 for detailed discussion.

20.2 Forms of the gerund

(a) All verbs of the *-ar* conjugation, including radical changing verbs: replace the *-ar* of the infinitive by *-ando*: *hablar* 'to speak' > *hablando*, *contar* 'to tell' > *contando*.

(b) Verbs of the *-er* and *-ir* conjugations: replace the infinitive ending with *-iendo*: *temer* 'to fear' > *temiendo*, *vivir* 'to live' > *viviendo*, *producir* 'to produce' > *produciendo*.

Irregular verbs form the gerund in the same way – *ser* > *siendo*, *tener* > *teniendo* – with the following exceptions:

verbs like <i>construir</i>	<i>construyendo, huyendo</i>
verbs like <i>poseer</i>	<i>poseyendo, leyendo</i>
verbs ending in <i>-ñir</i> or <i>-ñer</i>	<i>tañendo</i>
verbs ending in <i>-llir</i>	<i>bullendo</i>
verbs like <i>pedir</i>	<i>pidiendo</i>
verbs like <i>sentir</i>	<i>sintiendo, riñendo</i>
verbs like <i>reír</i>	<i>riendo, sonriendo</i>
<i>dormir, morir</i>	<i>durmiendo, muriendo</i>
<i>traer, caer</i> and their compounds	<i>trayendo, cayendo</i>
<i>decir</i> and its compounds	<i>diciendo</i>

erguirse
ir
ófr and its compounds
poder
venir and its compounds

irguiéndose
yendo
oyendo
pudiendo
viniendo

20.3 'A box containing books', 'a girl speaking French', etc.

English and French regularly replace relative clauses by a participle construction using the *-ing* form or the *-ant* form of the verb: 'We need a girl who speaks French'/'We need a girl speaking French', 'He had a box that contained several books'/'He had a box containing several books', *C'est là une réponse qui équivaut à un refus*/*C'est là une réponse équivalant à un refus*¹ 'That's a reply that amounts/amounting to a refusal'.

Since the Spanish gerund can theoretically only modify verbs and not nouns, such sentences must usually be translated by a relative clause:

<i>Necesitamos una chica que hable francés</i> (not * <i>hablando francés</i>)	We need a girl who speaks French
<i>Tenía una caja que contenía varios libros</i> (not * <i>conteniendo libros</i>)	He had a box containing several books
<i>Ésa/Ésa es una respuesta que equivale a una negativa</i> (not * <i>equivaliendo a . . .</i>)	That's a reply amounting to a refusal

The gerund is possible only when there is a verb in the main clause to which it can refer, e.g. *Me escribió rogándome que fuera a verla* 'She wrote a letter asking me to go and see her'. *El cartero trajo una carta pidiendo dinero* 'The postman brought a letter asking for money' is therefore correct only if *pidiendo* refers to *trajo . . .* and not to *carta*, i.e. only if the postman himself is asking for money.

However, this rule is broken:

(a) In captions to pictures.

<i>Dos 747 siendo preparados para el despegue</i> <i>El Avante publicó mi foto quitándome los aretes</i> (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)	Two 747s being prepared for take-off <i>Avante published a photo of me taking off my earrings</i> ²
--	---

(b) After verbs meaning 'hear', 'imagine', 'see', 'find', usually to show that the action is actually in progress. See 20.7 for more details.

(c) In the exceptional cases of the adjectives *ardiendo* 'burning' and *hirviendo* 'boiling'. See 4.4 for discussion.

(d) In official and administrative documents.

<i>una ley decretando . . .</i> (= <i>una ley por la que se decreta . . .</i>)	a Law decreeing . . .
---	-----------------------

¹ Judge & Healey (1983), 183. Unlike Spanish and English, French also allows the *-ant* form to refer to a subject different to that of the main clause: *La pluie tombant à verse, le voyageur s'arrêta sous un hangar* (ibid.) = *Ya que llovía a cántaros, el viajero se detuvo bajo un granero* 'As it was pouring, the traveller stopped under a barn'.

² *Los aretes* = 'hoops', i.e. large earrings. Otherwise *los pendientes*.

This construction, sometimes called the *gerundio curalense*, is deeply entrenched in certain documents, e.g. the *Boletín Oficial del Estado*³, but Seco, (1992), 208 condemns it, as does the Academy's *Esbozo . . .*, 3.16.8.

(e) Occasionally by writers whose style is presumably above reproach:

*El propósito de Probo, el hombre solo
afrentando a la multitud, no se pudo realizar*
(Seco, 1992, xiii)⁴

It was not possible to realize the goal
of Probus, the man alone facing the
multitude

(f) Constantly in spontaneous speech and informal writing:

*Tenía mi edad y un hijo viviendo con su
mamá* (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)
. . . *luego ya en mi habitación, recién limpia
y oliendo a ambientador de flores* (C. Martín
Gaité, Spain)
Hombres trabajando a 400m (Mexican road
sign)

She was my age and had a son living
with her mother
Then back in my room, (which was)
recently cleaned and smelling of flower-
scented air-freshener
Men working at 400 metres

Foreign learners should probably avoid all these uses of the gerund except (a), (b) and (c). However, the grammarians' wholesale condemnation of (d) to (f) seems excessive, since in certain contexts these constructions are clearly acceptable to careful native speakers.

Note

The participle form ending in *-nte* may sometimes be used like the English *-ing* form: . . . *personas pertenecientes a diferentes clases sociales* ' . . . people belonging to different social classes'. This construction, possible only with a limited number of verbs, is discussed at 19.4.

20.4 Basic uses of the gerund

In the examples shown in 20.4.1 - 20.4.5, the gerund cannot be negated. One cannot say **No dándome cuenta de que estaba presente, me fui* for 'Not realizing he was present, I left' = *Sin darme cuenta de que estaba presente, me fui*. Also 'I've lost a lot of money by not answering the phone' = *He perdido mucho dinero por no contestar al teléfono*, not **. . . no contestando al teléfono*. An exception is *No queriendo molestar, me fui* 'Not wanting to be a nuisance, I left'.

20.4.1 Gerund used to modify the main verb in the sentence

In this case the gerund functions like an adverb. It may be used to indicate simultaneous actions.

The action denoted by the gerund must be happening at the same time as or almost simultaneously with that of the main verb. Sentences like *?El ladrón huyó volviendo horas más tarde* 'The thief fled, returning hours later' should be expressed *El ladrón huyó y volvió horas más tarde*. *?Abriendo la puerta, entró en la casa* (better *Abrió la puerta y entró en la casa*) is rather less acceptable in Spanish than 'Opening the door, he entered the house'.

Se fue gritando
Se levantó dando por terminada la entrevista

He went off shouting
He got up, judging the interview to be at
an end

³ A publication containing the definitive text of new Spanish laws.

⁴ Despite his unequivocal condemnation of this very construction (p. 208), in which case only . . . *el hombre solo que afrontaba a la multitud* is possible.

Metió la carta en el sobre, cerrándolo a continuación

He put the letter in the envelope, sealing it afterwards

Note

With the verbs *ser* and *estar* the gerund can translate 'when' or 'while', a construction strange to English-speakers: *Estando en París, me enteré de que su padre había muerto* 'While I was in Paris, I found out that his father had died', *Le conocí siendo yo bombero* 'I met him while I was a fireman', *Te lo diré, pero no estando aquí esta señora* 'I'll tell you, but not while this lady is here'.

20.4.2 Gerund to indicate method

The gerund may indicate the method by which an action is performed. English usually requires the preposition 'by':

Hizo su fortuna comprando acciones a tiempo

He made his fortune (by) buying shares at the right time

Te puedes poner en contacto conmigo llamando a este número

You can contact me by ringing this number

Elijo libros a través de las sugerencias de los periódicos y yendo a numerosas conferencias (Queen Sofía, quoted in *El País*)

I choose books from suggestions in the newspapers and by going to numerous lectures

Note

This construction is often equivalent to a condition: *Apretando/Si lo aprietas de ese modo lo vas a romper* 'You'll break it if you squeeze it'/'by squeezing it like that', *Poniéndose/Si se pone así conmigo usted no conseguirá nada* 'You'll get nowhere if you get like that with me', . . . *es probable que este servicio no se ofrezca en su provincia o que, aun existiendo, no se haya anunciado* (Spanish Yellow Pages) ' . . . It is probable that this service does not exist in your province or, even if it exists (lit. 'even existing'), it has not been advertised'.

20.4.3 To express purpose (= *para* + infinitive)

This construction occurs with verbs of communication:

Me escribió diciéndome/para decirme que fuera/fuese a verle

He wrote telling me to come and see him

Nos llamó pidiendo/para pedir dinero
Letonia y Estonia han aprobado leyes privando a la población rusa del derecho de ciudadanía (*El País*, Spain; *aprobar* functions like a verb of communication here)

He rang us asking/to ask for money
Latvia and Estonia have passed laws depriving their Russian population of citizenship

20.4.4 To indicate cause (= *ya que* . . . , *puesto que* . . . + finite verb)

Siendo estudiante, tendrá usted derecho a una beca

Since you're a student, you'll be entitled to a grant

Miguel, viendo que era inútil intentar persuadirla, se fue

Seeing/Since he could see that it was useless to try to persuade her, Miguel left

Confieso que, a mí, siendo editor, lo único que me preocupa es que no lean (*Cambio16*, Spain)

I admit that, since I'm a publisher, the only thing that worries me is that they don't read

20.4.5 To express concession (= *aunque* + finite verb)

The Spanish gerund occasionally signifies 'although', often in combination with *aun* 'even'.

Siendo inteligente como es, parece tonto
Aun estando enfermo nos resulta útil

Although intelligent, he looks stupid
He's useful to us, even though he's ill

. . . *pueden pensar que el sol tiene un pie de diámetro, siendo que la "realidad" es gigantescamente diferente* (E. Sábato, Argentina, interview)

. . . they may think that the sun is one foot in diameter, although 'reality' is vastly different

20.4.6 Preceded by *como* to replace *como si*

Me miró como riéndose (= *como si se estuviera riendo*)

He looked at me as though he were laughing

20.5 *En* + gerund

In older language and in some dialects this is an equivalent of *al* + infinitive: *en llegando al bosque* = *al llegar al bosque* 'on arriving at the woods' (cf. French *en arrivant à*). This construction seems to be virtually extinct in educated usage. Its modern equivalent, *al* + infinitive, is discussed at 18.3.

20.6 Gerund used to qualify the object of a verb

Like the English *-ing* form, the Spanish gerund can also indicate an action performed by the direct object of certain kinds of verb:

(a) With verbs of 'perception' like 'see', 'hear', 'observe': see 20.7 for details.

(b) With verbs like *coger*, *pillar* ('to catch'), *arrestar* 'to arrest', *dejar* 'to leave', *encontrar* 'to find', *sorprender* 'to surprise':

La cogió/pilló robando

He/She caught her stealing

La dejó llorando

I left her crying

Dejamos a Andrés durmiendo (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)

We left Andrés sleeping

Encontré a mis hermanos discutiendo

I found my brothers (or brothers and sisters) quarrelling

Me sorprendí repitiendo entre dientes . . . (C. Martín Gaité, Spain)

I caught myself repeating between my teeth . . . (i.e. 'muttering')

(c) With verbs of representation like 'paint', 'draw', 'photograph', 'show', 'describe', 'imagine', 'represent', etc.

La pintó tocando el clavicémbalo

He painted her playing the harpsichord

Esta fotografía muestra al rey bajando del avión

This photo shows the King getting out of the plane

Me los imagino emborrachándose

I can imagine them getting drunk

Note

Captions under photos or other pictures fall into this category. In such captions the gerund very often appears with no accompanying finite verb. See 20.3a above.

20.7 Gerund after verbs of perception ('see', 'hear', etc.)

Commonly after the verb *ver* 'to see', and occasionally after *oír* 'to hear', *recordar* 'to remember', *olvidar* 'to forget', the gerund may be used to qualify the object of the main verb.

Usually the infinitive is also possible in this construction, the difference being one of aspect: the infinitive indicates an action that is completed and

the gerund an action that is or was not yet complete. Compare *La vi fumando un cigarrillo* 'I saw her (while she was) smoking a cigarette', *La vi fumar un cigarrillo* 'I saw her smoke a cigarette'.

There is usually a colloquial alternative which uses a finite verb: *La vi que fumaba un cigarrillo* 'I saw that she was smoking a cigarette'. Further examples:

Cuando Félix divisó al doctor leyendo una revista política . . . (C. Fuentes, Mexico)
No se me olvida mi hijo bailando con ella
La recuerdo siempre cantando

When Felix caught sight of the doctor reading a political magazine . . .
 I can't forget my son dancing with her
 I remember her always singing

With verbs of motion the gerund is usually not possible: 'I saw him coming towards me' is *Le/Lo vi venir hacia mí* or *Le/Lo vi que venía hacia mí* but not **Le/Lo vi viniendo hacia mí*.

Oír 'hear' may take a gerund, but prefers either the infinitive or the construction with *que* and a finite verb. The infinitive is the safest option for foreign learners. A gerund could be taken to refer to the subject of the main verb; e.g. ?*La oí entrando* could mean 'I heard her while (I was) entering':

La oí toser/que tosía
Oí entrar a alguien/que alguien entraba
 . . . *oyendo a su padre hablar de que*⁵
Emiliano Zapato había tomado Chilpancingo
 (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)

I heard her coughing
 I heard someone come in
 . . . listening to her father talking about
 Emiliano Zapata having occupied
 Chilpancingo

But the gerund is possible if its subject is inanimate:

Cuando el sargento oye la corneta tocando la retirada . . . (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)
Of el ruido del yelo cayendo sobre un vaso
 (J. Marías, Spain)

When the sergeant hears the trumpet sounding the retreat . . .
 I heard the noise of the ice falling onto a glass

20.8 Other uses of the gerund

20.8.1 Gerund with *andar*

This translates the English 'to go around doing something', with the same faintly pejorative implication of pointless activity. *Ir* can usually replace *andar* in this construction:

Siempre anda/va buscando camorra
Aduve maldiciendo todo el jueves
 (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)

He always goes round looking for trouble
 All that Thursday I went around swearing

Note

Spoken (not written) Mexican often uses *andar* for *estar* to form the continuous: *¿Andas trabajando?* (for *¿Estás trabajando?*) 'Are you working?'; see 15.5.

20.8.2 Gerund with *ir*

(a) Expresses slow or gradual action:

⁵ *De que* is correct here. For misuse of *de que* after certain verbs, see 33.4.3.

Nos vamos haciendo viejos
Cada vez voy teniendo menos memoria
Poco a poco el consumidor ha ido
descubriendo que las frutas de Cuba están a
punto aunque sean de color amarillo verdoso
(interview, *Granma*, Cuba)
Ella se fue doblando hasta caer al suelo
(*Cambio16*, Spain)

We're (gradually) getting older
My memory's getting worse and worse
Gradually the consumer has discovered
that fruit from Cuba is ripe even if it is
greenish yellow in colour

She gradually doubled up until she fell to
the ground

Note

Spoken Mexican-Spanish also uses this construction to express an action that is just finishing (examples from J.M. Lope Blanch (1991), 16): *Espera un momento; voy acabando ya* (Spain *estoy acabando ya/estoy a punto de acabar*) 'Wait a moment, I'm just finishing', *Voy llegando ahorita* (Spain *acabo de llegar*) 'I've only just arrived'.

(b) By extension, to express careful, painstaking or laborious actions:

*Ya puedes ir preparando todo para cuando
lleguen*
Gano lo necesario para ir tirando
Ve escribiendo todo lo que te dicte

You can start getting things ready for
when they arrive
I earn enough to get by
Write down everything as I dictate it to
you

20.8.3 Gerund with *llevar*

This provides a neat translation of 'for' in time expressions:

Llevo dos meses pintando esta casa

I've been painting this house for two
months

This construction is discussed at 32.3.1.

20.8.4 Gerund with *quedarse* (see also 27.3.6)

This translates the idea of 'to continue to do something':

Me quedé ayudándolos un rato
Se quedó mirándome

I stayed on for a while to help them
She remained staring at me

20.8.5 Gerund with *salir*

Usually translates English phrases involving 'come out'/'go out':

Salió ganando
Era lo único que quería: salir volando
por la ventana (C. Martín Gaité, Spain,
dialogue)

He came out the winner
It was all I wanted to do – fly out of the
window

20.8.6 Gerund with *seguir* and *continuar*

Seguir and *continuar* with the gerund translate 'to go on . . . -ing', 'to continue to . . .'. See 32.8 for discussion.

20.8.7 Gerund with *venir*

To express an action that accumulates or increases with time. It sometimes conveys mounting exasperation:

Hace años que viene diciendo lo mismo
La sensación de aislamiento en la Moncloa
viene siendo progresiva (*Cambio16*, Spain)

He's been saying the same thing for years
The sensation of isolation at the Moncloa
(the Spanish Prime Minister's residence)
is steadily growing

Los programas que se vienen ejecutando
en el campo de la cardiología infantil . . .
(interview, *Granma*, Cuba)

The programmes (US 'programs') that
have been carried out in the field of
child cardiology . . .

Note

The following construction is typically Mexican: *¿Qué, no lo viste? Ah, claro: tú vienes llegando apenas* 'What? Didn't you see it? Oh, of course, you've only just arrived' (from J.M. Lope Blanch (1991), 17).

20.8.8 Gerund with acabar

Means 'end by':

*Siempre acaba enfadándose
Acabarás haciendo lo que ella diga*

He always ends by getting mad
You'll end by/up doing what she says

Acabar por + infinitive is an equivalent and is the more common construction in negative statements:

Acabarás por no salir nunca de casa

You'll end by/up never going out of the house

20.9 Translating the English *-ing* form

The following examples consist mainly of cases where the English *-ing* form may not be translated by the Spanish gerund.

20.9.1 When the *-ing* form is the subject of a verb

This is normally translated by an infinitive or by a suitable noun:

Learning a language is fun
Eating too much butter is bad for the heart
No smoking
Skiing is expensive
Salmon fishing is an art

*Aprender un idioma es divertido
Comer demasiada mantequilla es malo para el corazón
Prohibido fumar
Esquiar cuesta mucho
La pesca del salmón es un arte*

20.9.2 When the *-ing* form is the object of a verb

In this case there are two possibilities:

(a) When the same subject performs both actions, use an infinitive or a noun:

He dreads having to start
I like swimming
He gave up gambling
Try ringing him
There's nothing I like better than working in the garden

*Teme tener que empezar
Me gusta nadar/Me gusta la natación
Dejó de jugar/Dejó el juego
Intenta llamarlo/le
No hay nada que me guste más que trabajar en el jardín*

(b) When the actions are performed by different subjects, use a clause or noun. The subjunctive must be used where required by the rules laid out in Chapter 16:

I can't stand Pedro singing
I didn't mind him/his living here
I recommended promoting her

*No puedo ver que Pedro cante
No me importaba que viviera/viviese aquí
Recomendé su ascenso/que la ascendiesen/ascendieran*

I approve of you(r) getting up early

Me parece bien que te levantes temprano

Note

Some verbs allow the gerund. See 20.7.

20.9.3 The -ing form used in a passive sense

Care is needed when the English *-ing* form replaces a passive infinitive, cf. 'Your hair needs cutting' (= 'Your hair needs to be cut'). In the Spanish translation an infinitive or a clause must be used:

Your hair needs cutting	<i>(Te) hace falta que te corten el pelo or que te cortes el pelo</i>
This needs attending to	<i>Hace falta cuidarse de esto/Hay que atender a esto</i>
You're not worth listening to	<i>No vale la pena escucharte</i>
It wants/needs polishing	<i>Hace falta sacarle brillo</i>

20.9.4 The -ing form preceded by prepositions

Unless the preposition is 'by' (see 20.4.2), an infinitive or clause must be used:

I'm looking forward to seeing you	<i>Tengo ganas de verte</i>
I prefer swimming to running	<i>Prefiero nadar a correr</i>
He was punished for being late	<i>Lo/Le castigaron por llegar tarde</i>
He's thinking of starting a business	<i>Piensa empezar un negocio</i>
You get nothing in life without working	<i>No se consigue nada en esta vida sin trabajos/sin trabajar</i>
He was furious at being mistaken for his brother	<i>Le enfureció que le confundieran/confundiesen con su hermano</i>

20.9.5 The -ing form before nouns

(a) If the *-ing* form is itself a noun, translation is usually by an infinitive or a noun:

driving permit	<i>el carnet/el permiso de conducir</i>
dancing shoes	<i>los zapatos de baile</i>
fishing rod	<i>la caña de pescar</i>

(b) If the *-ing* form is a participle (adjective) then a relative clause may be used, unless a participle in *-ante*, *-(i)ente* exists (see 19.4):

a walking doll	<i>un muñeco andante</i>
the chiming bells	<i>las campanas que tañen/tañían</i>
a worrying problem	<i>un problema inquietante</i>
a convincing reply	<i>una respuesta convincente</i>

But often an idiomatic solution must be sought in either case:

flying planes	<i>aviones en vuelo</i>
turning point	<i>el punto decisivo/la vuelta de la marea, etc.</i>
steering wheel	<i>el volante</i>
dining room	<i>el comedor</i>

Note

For the exceptional use of *hirviendo* 'boiling' and *ardiendo* 'burning' as adjectives, see 4.4.

21

Modal auxiliary verbs

21.1 General

This chapter discusses the following commonly occurring auxiliary verbs:

<i>poder</i>	to be able to, to be allowed to, can, could
<i>saber</i>	to know how to
<i>querer</i>	to want
<i>soler</i>	to be in the habit of
<i>deber</i>	must, ought to, should
<i>haber (que, de)</i>	to have to

All of these verbs, except *deber*, are conjugated irregularly. Their forms are shown in Chapter 13.

21.2 Poder and saber 'to be able to'/'to know how to'

21.2.1 Poder and saber contrasted

Both verbs are often equivalent to 'can' or 'could' but their meanings are slightly different: *saber*, as well as 'to know', means 'to know how to do something', and *poder* means 'to be able to do something'/'to be allowed to do something':

<i>¿Sabes nadar?</i>	Can you swim? (do you know how to?)
<i>¿Puedes nadar hoy?</i>	Can you swim today? (are you able to/are you allowed to?)
<i>Se sabe ganar las simpatías de todo el mundo</i>	She knows how to win people's affections

Notes

(i) Since 'can' and 'could' have no infinitives or participles in English, *poder* is translated by 'to be able to'/'to be allowed to' in compound and future tenses: *Nunca había podido descifrarlo/Nunca podrá descifrarlo* 'She had never been able to decipher it/She'll never be able to decipher it'.

(ii) *No poder (por) menos de* means the same as *no poder evitar* + infinitive: *No podré (por) menos de decírselo* 'I won't be able to stop myself from telling him/her'.

The Latin-American equivalent is *no poder menos que*.

(iii) Idioms with *poder*: *No puedo más, estoy harta* 'I cannot go on, I'm fed up', *Al menos en ese terreno la vida no ha podido conmigo* (C. Martín Gaité, Spain) 'In this area at least, life hasn't got the better of me'.

21.2.2 Preterite and imperfect of poder and saber

The preterite refers to one occasion, the imperfect to a period of time usually made clear by the context. The preterite usually means 'to manage to':

<i>No pudo escaparse</i>	He couldn't escape (he didn't manage to)
<i>No podía escaparse</i>	He couldn't escape (at that time; no information about whether he eventually did)
<i>¿Cómo pudiste hacerlo?</i>	How could you/did you manage to do it?
<i>No me pudo ver porque estaba ocupada</i>	She couldn't/didn't get to see me because she was busy

Note

The preterite of *saber* 'to know' means 'found out'; the imperfect means 'knew': *cuando supe la verdad* 'when I found out/heard the truth'; *sabía la verdad* 'I/she knew the truth'.

21.2.3 Poder to express possibility and suggestions

Poder is usually translated by 'could' or 'may'. Except where indicated, either the imperfect or the conditional can be used.

(a) Possibility/suggestions

<i>Podíamos/Podríamos ir al cine esta tarde</i>	We could go to the cinema this afternoon/evening
<i>Podía no haberla visto</i>	He may not have seen her
<i>Puedes/Podías/Podrías venir a comer mañana</i>	You could come to lunch tomorrow
<i>Puede/Podría/Podría haberle ocurrido algo (podiera haber . . . is written style)</i>	Something may/could have happened to him

Note

Puede ser, podría/pudiera ser, podría/pudiera haber sido are equivalent to 'it could be', 'it could have been'. *Pudiera* is less often used in the spoken language: *Aun en el caso de que nuestro viejo profesor se hubiera muerto, que bien pudiera ser . . .* (C. Martín Gaité, Spain) 'Even if our old teacher has died, which could well have happened . . .'

(b) Polite requests

The conditional is perhaps more usual than the imperfect in polite requests, but both are often heard:

<i>¿Podría/Podía usted abrir la ventana?</i>	Could you open the window?
<i>¿Podías/Podías decirle al jefe que estoy enfermo?</i>	Could you tell the boss I'm ill?

(c) The preterite indicative expresses something that could have happened but did not:

<i>El día que pudo estallar la Tercera Guerra Mundial (Cambio16, Spain)</i>	The day World War III could have broken out
<i>Pensando en lo que pudo haber sido y no fue (J. Marsé, Spain)</i>	Thinking of what might have been and wasn't

(d) The imperfect indicative (not the conditional) can also be used to reproach somebody for something done or left undone in the past:

<i>Me lo podías haber dicho</i>	You could have told me
<i>Podías haber puesto algún adornito de Navidad (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain)</i>	You could have put up some Christmas decorations

In answers, *puede ser* can be abbreviated to *puede*:

— <i>¿Vas a pescar mañana?</i> — <i>Puede</i>	'Are you going fishing tomorrow?' 'Perhaps . . .'
---	--

For the use of *puede ser que*, *pudiera ser que*, *podría ser que*, *podría/pudiera haber sido que* with the subjunctive, see 16.3.1.

21.2.4 Poder used in speculations

<i>Ha llamado alguien. ¿Quién puede/podrá haber sido/ha podido ser?</i>	Somebody rang. Who could it have been?
<i>¿Dónde se puede haber ido/puede haberse ido?</i>	Where can she have gone?

21.3 Deber, deber de and tener que

21.3.1 Deber to express obligation

<i>Su hijo debe trabajar más si quiere aprobar el examen</i>	Your son must work harder if he is to pass the examination
<i>Debes decirme lo que sepas</i>	You ought to/must tell me what you know

In the last two examples *tener que* could be used instead to strengthen the obligation, i.e. *Tienes que decirme . . .*

Notes

(i) The degree of obligation is reduced by using the conditional or, less often, the *-ra* form of *deber*. Since the imperfect may colloquially replace the conditional, *debería hacerlo*, *debía hacerlo* and *debiera hacerlo* may therefore all have the same meaning, although *debiera* has a more literary flavour: *Debías/Deberías/Debieras haberle/lo llamado* 'You ought to/should have called him'.

(ii) *No tener más remedio que* is a variation of *tener que* often used in every day language to express strong obligation: *No tengo más remedio que despedirla* 'I have to/I'm obliged to fire her'.

21.3.2 Deber (de) to express probability or supposition

Deber de can only express probability or supposition, although *deber* alone is nowadays also used with this meaning:

<i>Debía (de) saber mucho</i>	He must/ought to have known a lot
<i>Debiste (de) llegar tarde</i>	You must have arrived late
<i>Debe (de) haber sido muy guapa</i>	She must have been very beautiful
<i>Deben (de) ser las cinco</i>	It must be five o'clock

The loss in modern Spanish of the distinction between obligation (*deber*) and supposition (*deber de*) creates ambiguities. Use of *deber de* to translate 'must' would clarify the following examples:

<i>Debió hacerlo Juan</i>	John ought to have done it (on that occasion)/John must have done it
<i>Debía hacerlo Juan</i>	John used to have to do it/John ought to do it/John must have done it

21.3.3 Preterite, conditional and imperfect of deber

The preterite expresses something that should have been done. The conditional and the imperfect express something that should be done:

<i>Debió decírtelo antes</i>	She ought to/should have told you before
<i>Debía/debería decírtelo antes</i>	She ought to/should tell you before
<i>En ese momento debí desconfiarme, pero no lo hice (J. Ibarguengoitia, Mexico, dialogue)</i>	At that moment I ought to/should have been suspicious, but I wasn't

Volvió al sitio del que nunca debió salir
(E. Arenas, dialogue, Spain)

He went back to the place he ought
never to have left/should never have left

21.4 *Haber*

Haber is the modal auxiliary used for forming compound tenses. This use is discussed at 14.8.

Haber, present tense *hay*, is used to translate 'there is', 'there are', 'there were', etc., and is discussed in Chapter 30.

21.4.1 *Haber de*

Haber de has the following values:

- (a) It expresses mild obligation or future intention. This usage is nowadays rare and literary: *He de hacerlo cuanto antes* 'I have to do it as soon as possible'.
- (b) It expresses probability. This usage is also nowadays rare and literary except in Mexico, where it is very common; see 14.6d: *Ha de haberle dicho todo* 'He must have told him everything'.
- (c) In the conditional it translates an indignant or mystified 'should . . .': *¿Por qué habría de ofenderse si yo no dije nada?* (or, more colloquially, *iba a ofenderse*) 'Why should she get offended if I didn't say anything?'

21.4.2 *Haber que*

Haber que means 'to be necessary to . . .'. In this construction the verb is used only in the third-person singular. The present-tense form is *hay que*.

Hay que darles tiempo

One has to give them time/It's necessary
to give them time

No había que hacer autopsia (G. García
Márquez, Colombia)

There was no need to do an autopsy

Hubo que llamar a los bomberos

It was necessary to call the firemen

21.5 *Querer* 'to want to'

This verb must not be confused with *querer* 'to love' which cannot precede an infinitive: *Adoro nadar* 'I love swimming'.¹

There is a difference of meaning between the preterite and the imperfect:

Quise hablar con José

I wanted/tried to talk to José (but failed)

Quería hablar con José

I wanted to talk to José (and may or may
not have succeeded)

But sometimes the meanings overlap, especially when the speaker is being very assertive:

Lo hice porque quise/quería hacerlo

I did it because I wanted to

The negative preterite means 'to refuse to'. Compare *No quiso hacerlo* 'He didn't want to do it' (so he didn't) and *No quería hacerlo* 'He didn't want to do it' (no information about whether he did it).

The imperfect subjunctive and the conditional are interchangeable:

¹*Querer* 'to love' can only be used with humans and animals: *Adoro el helado de vainilla* 'I love vanilla ice cream'.

No quisiera/querría volver a nacer

I wouldn't like to be reborn/born again

The imperfect indicative can also be used instead of these two tenses in polite enquiries:

Querría/Quisiera/Quería hablar con el encargado

I would like to speak to the manager

21.6 Soler

Soler translates the idea of 'usually', 'to be used to'. It is not used in the future, preterite and conditional tenses:

No me suele doler la cabeza

I don't usually suffer from headaches

Los zapatos de tacón alto suelen ser incómodos

High-heeled shoes are usually uncomfortable

Ha acostumbrado a/solido portarse bien conmigo

She's usually behaved well towards me

No es que suele verla a menudo, pero alguna vez la veo

It's not as if I saw her often, but I see her sometimes

Note

Acostumbrar a may replace *soler* in some cases. It is more literary in style and implies 'to be in the habit of': *No acostumbro a/suelo beber* 'I don't usually drink', *Acostumbra a/suele salir temprano* 'He habitually goes out early'. *Acostumbrar* without *a* is found in classical texts in Spain and is still used in Latin America: Seco (1992), 14, quotes the Argentine A. di Benedetto: *Un periodista que acostumbra contar cosas* 'a journalist who habitually tells things'.

21.7 Deber, poder and tener que: alternative construction with compound tenses

Deber and *poder* allow a variety of constructions in compound tenses, i.e. tenses based on *haber* and a participle. The option of pronoun shifting (discussed at 11.14.4) doubles the number of possibilities:

Ha debido hacerlo/Lo ha debido hacer

He must have done it

Debe haberlo hecho/Lo debe haber hecho

He could have done it

Ha podido hacerlo/Lo ha podido hacer

He could have done it

Puede haberlo hecho/Lo puede haber hecho

They must have done it (before)

Habían debido hacerlo/Lo habían debido hacer

They must have done it (before)

Debían haberlo hecho/Lo debían haber hecho

They could have done it (before)

Habían podido hacerlo/Podían haberlo hecho

They could have done it (before)

Podían haberlo hecho/Lo podían haber hecho

He ought to have done it

Habría debido hacerlo/Lo habría debido hacer

He ought to have done it

Debería haberlo hecho/Lo debería haber hecho
(*debiera* can replace *debería* here)

and also *habría podido hacerlo*, *Podría haberlo hecho*, etc. 'He might have done it'.

Tener que may also appear in the same alternative constructions: *Ha tenido que hacerlo/Tiene que haberlo hecho* 'He had to do it', etc.

22

Personal *a*

22.1 Personal *a*: general

The use of the preposition *a* before certain kinds of direct object is so important in Spanish that it deserves a separate chapter.

The basic rule is that identified or particularized human direct objects are marked by a preceding *a*: *Vi a María* 'I saw Mary'. Compare *Vi el coche* 'I saw the car' (non-human).

However, 'personal' *a* is a rather inaccurate label since the same *a* also sometimes appears with inanimate direct objects, particularly, but not only, whenever there might be doubt about which is the subject and which the object, as sometimes happens in Spanish where word order is quite flexible.

22.2 Personal *a* before nouns denoting human beings or animals

Personal *a* is required before a direct object that denotes a known or identified human being, or a 'personified' animal.

Before a direct object that is a personal name or title – *Pedro, el jefe, mamá* – personal *a* is never omitted: *Conozco a tu madre* 'I know your mother', *Vi a Mario y a Elena* 'I saw Mario and Helen', *No aguanto al nuevo jefe* 'I can't stand the new boss'.

With animals, use of personal *a* depends on the extent to which the creature is humanized. Pets virtually always take personal *a*, but in other cases use of *a* depends on factors of emotion or context: the more familiar the language, the more likely the use of *a*. At the zoo one is likely to say *Vamos a ver a los monos* 'Let's go and see the monkeys' but, probably, *Vamos a ver los insectos* 'Let's go and see the insects', monkeys being more lovable than cockroaches. Clinical or scientific language would naturally use personal *a* much more sparingly.

In the following examples personal *a* is obligatory:

No conozco a Feliciano

Acompañé a mi madre a la clínica

Llevó a las niñas al zoo

La policía busca a un individuo con una cicatriz en el labio inferior

¿Quieres pasear al perro?

Dejad de atormentar al gato

I don't know Feliciano

I accompanied my mother to the clinic

He took the girls to the zoo

The police are seeking an individual with a scar on his lower lip

Do you want to take the dog for a walk?

Stop tormenting the cat

Compare the following sentences in which the object of the verb is not individually particularized:

<i>Busco un marido que me ayude en la casa</i>	I'm looking for a husband who will help me in the house
<i>Vi un periodista en el jardín</i>	I saw a journalist in the garden
<i>Veía un chico que jugaba en silencio</i> (E. Sábato, Argentina)	I saw a child playing in silence
<i>Este DC-10 ha traído pasajeros desde Berlín</i>	This DC-10 has brought passengers from Berlin
<i>Utilizaron un perro lobo para el experimento</i>	They used an Alsatian dog for the experiment

Note

A proper name may occasionally denote an inanimate object, in which case personal *a* cannot be used: *Dice conocer todo Shakespeare* 'He says he knows the whole of Shakespeare' (i.e. the works), *Van a subastar un Turner* 'They're going to auction a Turner' (painting), *Procura tomar la reina* 'Try to take the queen' (chess).

22.3 Personal *a* with nouns linked by *como*

A noun linked by *como* to a previous noun which itself has a personal *a*, or to a pronoun standing for such a noun, must also take personal *a* (although it may be omitted colloquially if there is no ambiguity):

<i>Tuve que recoger a mi hermana como a un fardo</i>	I had to pick up my sister as though she were a bundle
<i>Me trataba como a una reina</i> (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)	He treated me like a queen

?*Tuve que recoger a mi hermana como un fardo* sounds like '?I had to pick up my sister as if I were a bundle'.

22.4 Personal *a* before pronouns**22.4.1 Before pronouns other than relative pronouns**

When a pronoun stands for a person it takes personal *a*. These pronouns include *alguien*, *alguno*, *uno*, *ambos*, *cualquiera*, *nadie*, *otro*, *ninguno*, *este*, *ese*, *aquel*, *quien*, *todo*, *él*, *ella*, *usted* and other personal pronouns (excepting *me*, *te*, *se*, *nos*, *os*, *le*, *la*, *lo*). See next section for discussion of the use of personal *a* in relative clauses.

<i>He visto a alguien en el pasillo</i>	I've seen someone in the corridor
<i>Aunque yo no conozco a nadie de la gente que viene aquí</i> (C. Martín Gaité, Spain)	Although I don't know anyone among the people who come here
<i>Era capaz de insultar a cualquiera</i>	He was capable of insulting anybody
<i>¿A quién has visto?</i>	Who(m) did you see?
<i>A ése/ese es al que quiere, no a ti</i>	He's the one she loves, not you

22.4.2 Personal *a* before relative pronouns

Personal *a* may appear before a direct object relative pronoun that refers to a human being, in which case the form of the relative pronoun will be *quien*, *el que* or *el cual* (see 35.4.2 for discussion). If personal *a* is not used, *que* is the usual relative pronoun.

Personal *a* is not usual when the clause is clearly restrictive (as defined at 35.1.2). But if it is non-restrictive it must be used, though the difference

is occasionally elusive. Peninsular informants generally insisted on *a* in the following examples:

*Tengo un profesor al que/a quien han
nombrado miembro de la Academia
Es el único al que la ley no ha condenado*

I have a teacher whom they've appointed
as a member of the Academy
He's the only one the law hasn't
condemned

*Hace unos días, en el puerto, me dijiste que
yo era la primera persona a la que habías
querido (E. Sábato, Argentina, dialogue)
Plutón, esposo de Proserpina, a la que/a
quien/a la cual robó*

A few days ago, at the harbour, you told
me I was the first person you had loved

Pluto, the husband of Proserpine, whom
he carried off

Notes

(i) The word *único* generates disagreement. One hears *Tú eres el único que quiero* 'You're the only one I love', some prefer . . . *al que quiero*, others accept both.

(ii) *El que* or *quien* are obligatory in all types of clause if *que* alone creates ambiguities – as it quite often does with human antecedents. Compare *Ése/Ese es el autor que siempre ataca* 'That's the author who (or 'whom he') always attacks'. *Al que* or *a quien* . . . show clearly that 'whom he always attacks' is meant. Another example: *los militares que/a los que/a quienes han ascendido* 'the military men (whom) they have promoted' where use of personal *a* excludes the reading 'who have ascended'.

(iii) Personal *a* is rare with non-human objects, but if it occurs *el que* is the preferred relative pronoun: *Hemos encontrado enormes listas de coches a los que tenían controlados* (Cambio16, Spain) 'We have found enormous lists of cars that they had under surveillance'.

22.5 Personal *a* before personified nouns

A personified noun usually requires personal *a*. The decision as to whether a noun is personified or not is, however, dependent on complex factors of context:

*Tú temes al éxito tanto como al fracaso
Los cazas llevan bengalas de magnesio para
confundir a un misil dirigido (Cambio16,
Spain)*

You fear success as much as failure
The fighters carry magnesium flares to
confuse a guided missile

The last example shows how certain verbs, e.g. *confundir* 'confuse', *criticar* 'criticize', *satirizar* 'satirize', *insultar* 'insult', etc. tend, by their meaning, to personify their object. This explains – though does not justify – the occurrence of sentences like *?Criticaba a las novelas de fulano* 'He criticized so-and-so's novels' for *Criticaba las novelas* . . .

22.6 Personal *a* after *tener*, *querer*

These verbs acquire different meanings when used with personal *a*:

*Tengo un hijo y una hija
Tenemos una asistentia griega*

I've got a son and a daughter
We have a Greek maid

but:

*Así tiene al marido y a los hijos, a base de
bocadillos, latas y congelados*

That's how she keeps her husband and
children – on sandwiches, tins and
frozen food

Tengo a mi tío como fiador

I've got my uncle to act as guarantor

La humedad de la noche . . . tiene a las veredas resbaladizas y brillosas (M. Vargas Llosa, Perú; *vereda* for Peninsular *acera* 'pavement'; *brillosas* = *brillantes*)
Quiere una secretaria
Quiere a una secretaria

The dampness of the night makes the pavements slippery and shiny

He wants a secretary
 He loves a secretary

22.7 Omission of personal *a* before numerals

Nouns preceded by a number tend to be unspecified or unidentified and personal *a* is often omitted before them:

Vieron (a) media docena de soldados enemigos

They saw half a dozen enemy soldiers

Bayardo San Román . . . vio las dos mujeres vestidas de negro (G. García Márquez, Colombia)

Bayardo San Román saw the two women dressed in black

Sólo conozco un hombre capaz de componer esta emboscada maestra (idem; personal *a* omitted before *un* when it is a numeral rather than an article)

I only know one man capable of organizing this masterly ambush

Note

A particularized or identified personal noun will, however, take personal *a*: *Yo conocía personalmente a sus tres hijas* 'I knew his three daughters personally'.

22.8 Personal *a* combined with dative *a*

Ambiguity may arise when two *as* occur in the same sentence, e.g. *?Presenté a mi marido a mi jefe* 'I introduced my husband to my boss' or vice-versa. The common solution is to omit personal *a* and place the direct object after the verb and before the dative.

Presenté Miguel a Antonia
Denuncié el ladrón al guardia
Mande el paciente al especialista

I introduced Miguel to Antonia
 I denounced the thief to the policeman
 Send the patient to the specialist

Note

The problem of *preferir* is also solved in this way: *Yo prefiero Dickens a Balzac* 'I prefer Dickens to Balzac'.

22.9 Personal *a* before collective nouns

Personal *a* is normally used before collective nouns when these refer to human beings:

Sir Walter Raleigh enriqueció a la enclenque corte inglesa (Cambio16, Spain)
No conocía al resto del grupo un paso que podría poner a Estados Unidos en una posición delicada (La Prensa, Argentina)

Sir Walter Raleigh enriched the feeble English court
 I/(S)he didn't know the rest of the group a step which could put the US in a delicate position

A is obligatory in all these examples.

Compare the following sentences in which the nouns do not refer to inhabitants or members of a group, but to a place:

Los turistas inundan México
Hitler invadió la Unión Soviética

Tourists are inundating Mexico
 Hitler invaded the Soviet Union

Notes

(i) Before words like *país*, *nación*, *partido*, *movimiento*, when these words refer – or may refer – to people, *a* seems to be optional: *Criticó duramente al/el movimiento anarquista* ‘He criticized the anarchist movement severely’, *Será imposible gobernar a Euskadi* (*Cambio16*, Spain: omission possible) ‘It will be impossible to govern the Basque country’, *Son los sindicatos los que dirigen (a) esta nación* ‘It’s the unions that run this country’, *Un potente terremoto sacudió el/al país* ‘A powerful earthquake shook the country’, *Luis García Meza, quien gobernó el país entre julio de 1980 y agosto de 1981* (*El País*, al possible) ‘Luis García Meza, who governed the country between July 1980 and August 1981’.

(ii) Seeing, visiting, leaving or picturing a place does not call for personal *a*: *Estamos deseando ver Lima* ‘We’re longing to see Lima’, *Se negó a visitar Rumania* ‘He refused to visit Romania’, *Quería pintar Toledo* ‘He wanted to paint Toledo’, *Abandonaron Madrid* ‘They left Madrid’.

22.10 Personal *a* before inanimate objects

Personal *a* cannot appear before a noun denoting an inanimate direct object in straightforward sentences of the following kind:

He comprado un sacacorchos

I’ve bought a corkscrew

Escribe poesía

He writes poetry

Sus palabras delataban su derrotismo

His words betrayed his defeatism

But, despite its name, personal *a* is used before inanimate nouns:

(a) When there is likely to be ambiguity as to which is the subject and which the direct object of a verb. Such ambiguity is very common in relative clauses, where the verb often precedes the subject:

Es difícil saber en qué medida afectó esto a la economía cubana (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)

It is difficult to know to what extent this affected the Cuban economy

Este producto es el que mejor impermeabiliza al algodón

This product is the one that best waterproofs cotton

Una organización que protege a su coche (advertisement, *Cambio16*, Spain)

an organization which protects your car

A tres Autos y un Comercio quemaron

Three Cars and Store Burnt

(Latin-American headline, strange to Peninsular speakers)

(b) *A* also sometimes appears before inanimate direct objects when both subject and object are inanimate, even though there is apparently no danger of ambiguity.

It seems that this occurs only in those sentences in which the inanimate subject is also the true agent of the action. In a sentence like *La piedra rompió un cristal*, ‘The stone broke a pane of glass’ or *La novela causó una sensación* ‘The novel caused a sensation’ it can be argued that the agents of the action are the person who threw the stone or wrote the novel; *piedra* and *novela* are merely instruments. For this reason personal *a* is impossible.

However, if the inanimate subject is the real agent of the action, personal *a* may **optionally** appear. It is as though the native speaker were not entirely confident that word order alone – loose in Spanish – sufficiently clarifies which is the subject and which the object. The issue is not in doubt if one

of the nouns is a human being or is the instrument of a human being. But if both are of equal status, *a* identifies the object clearly:

<i>Ambos creían que los astros regían a las pasiones</i> (Octavio Paz, Mexico)	Both believed the stars ruled the passions
<i>Este morfema nominal concretiza al semantema</i> (F. Abad Nebot, Spain)	This nominal morpheme makes the semanteme concrete
<i>El suicidio de la muchacha . . . excitó a la opinión pública</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)	The girl's suicide . . . stirred public opinion
<i>Este clima caracteriza a la sierra andina</i>	This climate characterizes the Andes range

A could in fact be omitted in all these examples.

(c) *A* regularly appears after impersonal *se* so as to show that the *se* is indeed impersonal *se* and not any other kind of *se* such as reflexive *se* or passive *se*, etc.:

<i>En España se llamaba a la plata</i> (Sp. dinero) <i>de los cohechos y sobornos 'unto de México'</i> (O. Paz, Mexico; cf. <i>la plata se llamaba 'money was called . . .'</i>)	In Spain they used to call the money from bribery and graft 'Mexican grease'
<i>¿Se podía llamar a eso caridad?</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)	Could one call that charity?
<i>. . . la plataforma, como se llama a los andenes en Inglaterra</i> (J. Marías, Spain)	. . . the 'platform', as they call the <i>andén</i> (of a railway station) in England

22.11 A obligatory or preferred with certain verbs

(a) Some verbs always take the preposition *a*, e.g. *agarrarse a* 'to hold on to', *asociarse a* 'to associate oneself with', *sucedere a* 'to follow', *sustituir a* 'to substitute', *renunciar a* 'to renounce', *obedecer a*, 'to obey', *ayudar a* to 'help', *gustar/agradar a* 'to please', etc. However, this *a* may not always be personal *a* but some other manifestation of the preposition *a*:

<i>Considera que la opción más sabia es renunciar gradualmente a la energía nuclear</i> (El País: not personal <i>a</i>)	He considers that the wisest option is gradually to give up nuclear energy
<i>Esto obedece a unas normas de comportamiento . . .</i>	This obeys certain norms of behaviour . . .
<i>A los osos les gusta la miel</i>	Bears like honey
<i>Este nuevo producto ayuda al cabello a recobrar su brillo natural (a normal)</i>	This new product helps the hair recover its natural shine
<i>Este nuevo tipo de transistor sustituye a los anteriores</i>	This new type of transistor replaces the former ones

It is worth recalling at this point that there is an important difference between personal *a* and the dative *a* meaning 'to' after verbs of giving, saying, pointing, etc. The latter *a* is usually reinforced by a redundant pronoun, whereas the former is not – at least in the Peninsula and in careful speech in much of Latin America. Thus one says *Le dije a tu padre . . .* 'I said to your father . . .' (redundant *le*) but only *Vi a tu padre* 'I saw your father' not *?Le/Lo vi a tu padre*. Reinforcement with a redundant pronoun is only required when the object precedes the verb – *A tu padre le/lo vi ayer* 'I saw your father yesterday'. This word order device is explained at 11.16.1 and 37.5.3.

Sentences like *?Lo vi a tu padre* are, however, common in the Southern Cone and are heard in familiar Latin-American speech everywhere. See 11.16.4 for more details.

(b) A preferred after some verbs

Some verbs often take *a* before an inanimate direct object. These include *afectar a* 'to affect', *reemplazar a* 'to replace', *superar a* 'to overcome/exceed', *acompañar a* 'to accompany', *combatir a* 'to combat', *llamar a* 'to name/call'. However, usage is uncertain with some of them and Spanish-speakers sometimes disagree about the appropriateness of the use of *a* before an inanimate object:

Los historiadores británicos llaman "guerra peninsular" (a) lo que nosotros denominamos Guerra de la Independencia

Estas ventajas permiten al Volkswagen superar a sus rivales (a normal)

Las nuevas medidas también afectan (a) la deuda pública

El nuevo Ford ha reemplazado a la gama anterior

British historians give the name 'Peninsular War' to what we call the War of Independence

These advantages allow the Volkswagen to beat its rivals

The new measures also affect the public debt

The new Ford has replaced the previous range

23

Negation

23.1 General

Spanish negative words discussed in this chapter are:

<i>no</i>	no, not	<i>nunca/jamás</i>	never/ever
<i>nada</i>	nothing	<i>apenas</i>	hardly/scarcely
<i>nadie</i>	nobody	<i>en mi vida</i>	never in my life
<i>ni</i>	nor/not even	<i>en absoluto</i>	absolutely not
<i>ninguno</i>	none/no	<i>tampoco</i>	not even/nor
<i>nomás</i>	(Lat. Am.) just/only/ scarcely		

For the construction *no . . . sino* 'not . . . but' see 33.1.

Matters requiring special attention are the stylistic consequences of use or non-use of the double negative, e.g. *No lo he visto nunca/Nunca lo he visto* 'I've never seen it/him', the use of negative words in certain types of positive sentences, e.g. *¿Quién ha dicho nunca eso?* 'Who ever said that?', *más que nada* 'more than anything', and the use of redundant *no*, e.g. *¡Cuántas veces no te habré dicho!* 'How many times must I have told you!'.

23.2 No

23.2.1 Use and position

No usually precedes the word that it negates, but object pronouns are never separated from a verb: *no dije . . .* 'I didn't say . . .', but *No se lo dije* 'I didn't say it to him/her/you/them':

<i>Mario no estaba</i>	Mario wasn't there
<i>No perdamos tiempo</i>	Let us not waste time
<i>No todos son capaces de aprender idiomas</i>	Not everyone is capable of learning languages
<i>Arguyen – y no sin razón – que . . .</i>	They argue – and not without reason – that . . .
<i>No intentaba verla</i>	I/He/She wasn't trying to see her
<i>Intentaba no verla</i>	I/He/She was trying not to see her

If a verb has been deleted, *no* retains its position: *Bebe cerveza pero no bebe vino* > *Bebe cerveza, pero no vino* 'He drinks beer but not wine', *Viene mañana, pero no esta tarde* 'He's coming tomorrow but not this afternoon/evening', —*¿Sabéis nadar? —Yo sí, pero él no* "'Can you swim?" "I can, but he can't"'.

In very emphatic denials it may follow the noun: *¡Bases nucleares no!* 'No nuclear bases!', *Aquí puede entrar todo el que quiera, pero borrachos no* (or *pero no borrachos*) 'Anyone who wants to can come in here, but not drunkards', *Ah no, eso no* 'Oh no, not that.'

Notes

(i) Compound tenses do not allow participle deletion in Spanish. In answer to *¿Lo has visto?* 'Have you seen him/it?' one says *sí* or *sí, lo he visto*, or *no* or *no, no lo he visto*, but not **no, no lo he . . .* (compare English 'no, I haven't . . .'): —*¿Has sido tú?* —*No, no he sido yo* "'Was it you?" "No, it wasn't"', —*¿Se lo has dado?* —*No, no se lo he dado* "'Did you give it to him/her/them?" "No, I didn't"'. This rule is occasionally broken in the pluperfect: see 14.8 for an example.

(ii) Deletion of a gerund or infinitive is, however, possible: —*¿Estabas comiendo?* —*No, no estaba* "'Were you having lunch?" "No I wasn't"', —*¿Quieres venir?* —*No, no quiero* "'Do you want to come?" "No I don't"'.

(iii) If it means 'non-' or 'un-', *no* precedes the noun: *Yo estoy por la no violencia* 'I support non-violence', *la política de la no intervención* 'the non-intervention policy', *Es la única imagen no real en todo el libro* (J. Marsé, Spain) 'It's the only non-real image in the whole book'.

23.2.2 'No' and *no* contrasted

The English word 'no' is versatile and may require translation in various ways:

Look, no hands!
'What's the problem?' 'No money'

no petrol/(US) gas
no smoking
no way!
no kidding!?
There's no need for arguments

Mira, ¡sin manos!
—*¿Cuál es el problema?* —*No tengo/tiene/tenemos/tienen* (etc.) *dinero*
no hay gasolina
prohibido fumar/no fumar
¡ni hablar!
¿en serio?
No hay por qué discutir

23.2.3 *No* as a question tag

¿No? at the end of a statement implies that the asker already knows the answer, cf. 'isn't it?', 'do you?':

Usted habla inglés, ¿no?
Mejor tarde que nunca, ¿no?

You speak English, don't you?
Better late than never, don't you think?

Note

A negative question is handled as in English: i.e. *no* confirms the negative. There is no Spanish equivalent of the contradicting 'yes' of French (*si!*) or German (*doch*): —*¿No vienes?* —*No* "'Aren't you coming?" "No (I'm not)"', —*¿No vas a enfadarte otra vez?* —*Sí* "'You aren't going to get cross again?" "Yes I am"', —*¿No cerraste con llave el armario?* —*Sí* "'Didn't you lock the cupboard?" "Yes. I did"'.

23.2.4 'Redundant' *no*

An apparently superfluous *no* is inserted in certain types of sentence:

(a) Colloquially and optionally, to avoid two *ques* side by side:

Más vale que vengas conmigo que (no) que te quedes solo aquí (or . . . *a que te quedes solo . . .*)

Better you come with me than that you stay here alone

(b) In informal language redundant *no* is often unnecessarily used in comparisons, especially before an infinitive:

La obra de R. vale más para un conocimiento de la derecha que no para conocer la República (M. Tuñón de Lara, Spain)
Mejor que salgas con ellos que (no) con ella

R.'s work is more useful for gaining knowledge of the Right than of the Republic
Better you go out with them than with her

. . . *con los ojos más luminosos, más tristes y más agradecidos que ella no le vio nunca*
. . . (G. García Márquez, Colombia)

. . . with the most luminous, saddest and most grateful eyes she had ever seen in him . . .

(c) Optionally in interjections involving *cuánto* or *qué de* 'how much', 'how many'. Use of *no* is rather literary nowadays:

¡Cuántas veces no lo había soñado en los últimos tiempos! (L. Goytisolo, Spain)
¡Qué de angustias (no) habrán pasado!

How often he had dreamt of it lately!

What anguish they must have suffered!

(d) Optionally after *hasta* and *a menos que* in negative sentences:

Adolfito, hasta que no te tomes el bocadillo no te vas a jugar (E. Arenas, Spain, dialogue)
No era noticia hasta que no la publicaba ABC (Cambio16, Spain)

Adolfo, you're not going out to play until you eat your sandwich

It wasn't news until ABC published it

But *no* is not used if the main clause is positive:

Siguieron sin hacer nada hasta que llegó el capataz
Me quedaré aquí hasta que se ponga el sol

They carried on doing nothing until the foreman arrived

I'll stay here until the sun sets

(e) In literary usage, after expressions of fear: the *no* does not alter the sense. Note that *que* is used if the *no* is removed: *Temo no le haya sucedido/Temo que le haya sucedido alguna desgracia* 'I'm worried he may have suffered some misfortune', *Tenía miedo no le/Tenía miedo de que le vieran desde arriba* 'He was afraid that they would see him from above'.

23.2.5 *Nomás* (occasionally written *no más*)

Throughout Latin America this phrase has a variety of meanings in colloquial language that it does not have in Spain. The spelling *nomás* is never used in Spain.

—*¿Dónde está el hospital?* —*En la esquina nomás* (Spain *justo en la esquina*)
Pase nomás (Spain *pase, pase*, etc.)
El gringo viejo se murió en México. Nomás porque cruzó la frontera (C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue)
Una invitación del señor Presidente nomás no se rechaza (idem.)
nomás que venga . . .

'Where's the hospital?' 'Right on the corner'

But *do* come in

The old gringo died in Mexico. Just because he crossed the frontier

You don't refuse/turn down an invitation from the President himself as soon as she/he arrives . . .

Note

On both continents, *no . . . más que* means 'only' and must be distinguished from *no . . . más de* 'not more than'; see 5.5.

23.3 Double negative

One may say *nadie vino* or *no vino nadie* 'no one came'. As the second example shows, if a negative follows a verb, the verb must also be preceded by a negative. A negative sentence in Spanish requires that all the constituents of the sentence be negativized: *Pero una no debe esperar nunca nada de un hombre sino malas noticias* (Carmen Rico-Godoy, Spain) 'But one should never expect anything from a man except bad news':

<i>No dice nada</i>	He says nothing
<i>Nadie dijo nada</i>	No one said anything
<i>Apenas come nada</i>	He scarcely eats anything
<i>Tampoco vino nadie</i>	Nor did anyone come
<i>No sabe ni latín ni francés</i>	He knows neither Latin nor French
<i>No la he visto nunca con nadie</i>	I've never seen her with anyone

Examples of single negatives:

<i>Tampoco vino</i>	He didn't come either
<i>Apenas habla</i>	He scarcely talks
<i>Nadie cree eso</i>	No one believes that
<i>Ni él ni ella podían decir si esa servidumbre recíproca se fundaba en el amor o la comodidad</i> (G. García Márquez, Colombia)	Neither he nor she could have said whether this reciprocal servitude was based on love or convenience
<i>Ninguna era más guapa que ella</i>	No woman was more beautiful than her
<i>Jamás/Nunca la volvería a ver</i>	(S)he was never to see her again

The difference between a double and a single negative, e.g. between *nunca viene* and *no viene nunca*, is sometimes merely stylistic. References under the individual items give guidance on this subject.

Note

The double negative may occasionally be ambiguous, although intonation or context usually make the meaning clear: *Lo que dice no es nada* 'What he says is nothing' (i.e. worthless) or 'What he says isn't nothing' (i.e. it isn't worthless), *Sonia no llora por nada* 'Sonia doesn't cry over nothing'/'Sonia doesn't cry over anything' (cf. *Sonia llora por nada* 'Sonia cries over nothing').¹

23.4 Nada, nadie, nunca, jamás, ninguno in sentences that are affirmative in form or meaning

These words sometimes have the meaning of 'anything', 'ever', 'anyone', 'anything' in certain types of affirmative sentences:

(a) After comparisons:

<i>Más que nada, es taimado</i>	More than anything, he's cunning
<i>Más que a nadie, se parece a su padre</i>	He's more like his father than anyone (else)
<i>En España son muchos los que se precian de asar el cordero mejor que nadie</i> (Cambio16, Spain)	There are many in Spain who pride themselves on roasting lamb better than anyone else

¹ Example from Kauffman (1978). *Sonia no llora sin motivo* expresses the first idea unambiguously.

<p><i>Algo que [. . .] les pareció más violento, más subversivo que nada que jamás oírían</i> (José Donoso, Chile) <i>Salió más temprano que nunca</i> (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue; jamás not possible) <i>Ella es más inteligente que ninguna de las otras</i></p>	<p>Something which seemed to them more violent, more subversive than anything they would ever hear She went out earlier than ever before She's more intelligent than any of the other girls/women</p>
---	---

(b) In sentences that involve expressions of doubt, denial, abstention, impossibility, etc.

<p><i>Es dudoso que nadie pueda pasar por nativo en más de tres o cuatro idiomas</i></p> <p><i>Se negó siquiera a hablar a nadie de la emisora</i> (G. Cabrera Infante, Cuba) <i>Es imposible ver nada de lo que está sucediendo</i> <i>Es horrible contar todo esto a nadie</i> <i>Es poco probable que ninguno haya sobrevivido</i> <i>Me chocaría que jamás/nunca la encontrasen</i></p>	<p>It's doubtful whether anyone can pass as a native in more than three or four languages He even refused to talk to anyone from the radio station It's impossible to see anything of what's going on It's horrible to tell all this to anyone It's unlikely that any have survived I'd be amazed if they ever found her</p>
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(c) In questions or exclamations that expect a negative answer:

<p><i>¿A usted cuándo le han preguntado nada?</i> <i>¿Quién ha visto a nadie que trabaje más que él?</i> <i>¿Quién hubiera pensado nunca/jamás que se casaría con Josefa?</i> <i>¿Habrás visto nunca/jamás . . . ?</i> <i>¿Crees que ninguno de ellos te va a ayudar?</i></p> <p><i>¿Para qué despedirme de nada ni de nadie?</i> (A. Gala, Spain)</p>	<p>When did anyone ask you anything? Who has ever seen anyone who works more than he does? Who would ever have thought he'd have married Josefa? Did you ever see . . . ? Do you think any of them is going to help you? (or 'Do you think none of them is going to help you?') Why say goodbye to anyone or anything?</p>
--	---

(d) After *antes de*, *antes que*, and *sin*:

<p><i>He venido sin nada</i> <i>sin nadie que le cuidara</i> <i>Al otro día me levanté antes que nadie</i> (J. Cortázar, Argentina, dialogue) <i>Esto hay que hacerlo antes de empezar nada</i></p>	<p>I've come without anything without anyone to look after him The next day I got up before everybody else (lit. 'before anyone') This must be done before starting anything (else)</p>
--	---

Note

(i) Statements of emotion involve a subtlety: *Me sorprendería que nadie me llamara/que no me llamara/nadie* 'I'd be surprised if nobody rang me', *Me sorprendería que me llamara nadie* 'I'd be surprised if anyone rang me', *Sentiría que nadie me viera así/que me viera así nadie* 'I'd be sorry if anyone sees me (looking) like this', *Sentiría que nadie me viera así/Sentiría que no me viera así nadie* 'I'd be sorry if no one sees me (looking) like this'.

(ii) In sentences in which English allows 'something' after 'without' Spanish allows *algo*: . . . *sin que nadie pudiera hacer algo para impedirlo* (L. Spota, Mexico; *hacer nada* also possible) 'without anyone being able to do anything/something to stop it', *No podía dormir sin que algo la despertara/despertase* 'She couldn't sleep without something waking her up'.

23.5 Further remarks on individual negative words

23.5.1 *Nada, nadie*

(a) When *nada* or *nadie* are the complement of a verb or follow a preposition, they usually appear in the double negative construction in ordinary language:

<i>No sé nada</i>	I know nothing/I don't know anything
<i>No conozco a nadie</i>	I don't know anyone
<i>No es nada/nadie</i>	It's nothing/nobody
<i>No hay nada/nadie</i>	There's nothing/nobody
<i>No lo haría por nada/nadie</i>	I wouldn't do it for anything/anyone
<i>porque la palabra "felicidad" no era apropiada para nada que tuviera alguna vinculación con Alejandra</i> (E. Sábato, Argentina)	because the word 'happiness' was not appropriate for anything which had any link with Alejandra

In literary styles they may precede the verb:

<i>. . . nada prometen que luego traicionen</i> (L. Cernuda, Spain)	they promise nothing that they then betray
<i>A nadie conozco más apto para esta labor literaria</i>	I know no one more suited for this literary task
<i>Por nada del mundo quisiera perderme eso</i> (set phrase in everyday use)	I wouldn't miss that for anything in the world
<i>como esos hombres silenciosos y solitarios que a nadie piden nada y con nadie hablan</i> (E. Sábato, Argentina)	like those silent and solitary men who ask nothing from anyone and speak with no one

(b) When *nada, nadie* are the subject of a verb they usually precede it:

<i>Nada parece cierto en todo esto</i>	Nothing seems sure in all this
<i>Nada en la pieza es histórico</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)	Nothing in the play is historical
<i>Nadie quiso creerle que era honrado</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue)	No one was willing to believe he was honest

But a double negative construction is used in questions:

<i>¿No ha venido nadie?</i>	Has no one come?
<i>¿No ha llegado nada?</i>	Hasn't anything arrived?

Note

With some verbs either construction may be used: *No me gusta nada/Nada me gusta* 'I don't like anything', *Nada de lo que tú hagas me molesta/No me molesta nada de lo que tú hagas* 'Nothing you do bothers me'.

23.5.2 *Nada* as intensifier

Nada may be used adverbially with the meaning 'not at all':

<i>Manuel no trabaja nada</i>	Manuel does absolutely no work
<i>No hemos dormido nada</i>	We haven't slept a wink
<i>No ha sido nada cómoda la cárcel</i>	Prison wasn't comfortable at all

23.5.3 Further remarks on *nadie*

Nadie takes personal *a* if it is the object of a verb:

<i>Apenas conozco a nadie</i>	I hardly know anybody
<i>No se veía a nadie en la playa</i>	There was no one to be seen on the beach

Note

Nadie de should not be followed by a plural noun or pronoun: *nadie de la clase* but *ninguno de los alumnos* 'none of the students', *ninguno de ellos* 'none of them', *ninguno de nosotros* 'none of us'.

23.5.4 Ni

'Nor', 'neither'. As with other negative words, if *ni* follows the verb to which it refers the verb must itself be negated: *Ni tú ni yo lo sabemos* 'Neither you nor I know (it)', but *No lo sabemos ni tú ni yo* (same meaning).

Constructions like **Ni tú ni yo no lo sabemos* are considered archaic or incorrect.

Unlike 'nor', *ni* is usually repeated before each member of a list: *No han llegado (ni) Antonio, ni Pilar, ni Ana, ni Mariluz* 'Neither Antonio, Pilar, Ana nor Mariluz has arrived' (the first *ni* is optional).

Examples of the use of *ni*:

. . . <i>ya que entonces no había en la tierra ni sólidos ni líquidos ni gases</i> (J.L. Borges, Argentina)	since at that time there were neither solids nor liquids nor gases on Earth
<i>Ni fumo ni bebo</i> /No fumo ni bebo	I neither smoke nor drink
<i>Ni con ella, ni con nadie, me puedo comunicar</i> (M. Puig, Argentina, dialogue)	I can't communicate with her or with anybody

Notes

(i) *Ni* commonly translates 'not even'. It can often be reinforced by *siquiera*: *Ni (siquiera) en mis peores momentos soñé que esto pudiera suceder* 'Not even in my worst moments did I dream this could happen', *Pero ¡si no ha de tener ni (siquiera) diecisiete años!* 'But she can't even be seventeen!', *Eres un inútil, no puedes ni (siquiera) freírte un huevo* 'You're useless, you can't even fry yourself an egg', *experiencia que no les sirvió ni para enfrentarse con un puñado de bandidos* (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue) 'experience that didn't even help you take on a handful of bandits', *No entiendo ni una palabra (siquiera)* 'I don't understand a word', *¡Ni se te ocurra (siquiera) venir a verme!* 'Don't even get the idea of coming to see me!'.

(ii) Before a noun it may be an emphatic denial: —*¿Sabes quién es?* —*Ni idea* "'Do you know who it is?" "No idea"', —*¿Cuánto ganabas?* —*Ni (siquiera) un céntimo* "'What were you earning?" "Not a cent"'.

(iii) *Ni* is required after *sin*: *Vivió sin dinero ni ganas de tenerlo* 'He lived without money or the urge to have it', *sin mujer ni hijos* 'without wife or children'.

23.5.5 Ninguno

'No', 'none', 'nobody' (cf. French *aucun*, German *kein*). The double negative rule applies: if *ninguno* follows the verb, the verb must itself be negated: *Ninguno de ellos lo sabe*/No lo sabe ninguno de ellos 'None of them know', *Nunca compra ninguno* 'She never buys a single one'. In certain types of sentences, it may be an equivalent of 'any': see 23.4 for examples.

It may be either adjectival or pronominal. As an adjective it loses its final *-o* before a masculine noun or noun phrase.

It also often loses its final *-a* before feminine nouns (but not before adjectives) beginning with stressed *a-* or *ha-*: *ningún arma nuclear* 'no nuclear weapon'. (This, at least, is spoken usage, though the full form is properly written before such nouns). Examples:

<i>En ningún momento pensé que . . . en ningún miserable pueblo costero</i>	At no point did I think that . . . in no wretched coastal village
---	---

No aceptaremos ninguna solución parcial

We shall accept no partial (or 'biased') solution

The plural *ningunos/ningunas* is rare, presumably because there is scant need to mention more than one of something that does not exist. But it occurs with nouns that are always plural: *Ningunas vacaciones en Cataluña son completas sin una excursión al Pirineo* 'No holiday/vacation in Catalonia is complete without a trip to the Pyrenees', *Total, tenía 18 años y ningunas ganas de volver al pueblo* (A. Mastretta, dialogue, Mexico) 'In short/In a word, he was eighteen and had no desire to come back to the village'.

Examples:

(a) Pronominal forms

Ninguno de los que hablan un idioma está libre de dudas . . . (M. Seco, Spain)
O se lleva todos, o ninguno
Si he sido insincero con ninguno/alguno de vosotros, decídmelo (ninguno is more literary)

None of those who speak a language is free of doubts . . .
 Either you take them all, or none
 If I have been insincere with any of you, tell me so

(b) Adjectival forms

El ministro no hizo ningún comentario/no hizo comentario ninguno/alguno
 —*Si es molestia, puedo esperar.* —*Molestia ninguna/Ninguna molestia*
 . . . *había llegado al climaterio con tres hijas y ningún varón* (G. García Márquez, Colombia)

The minister made no comment
 'If it's a nuisance I can wait.' 'No nuisance at all'
 . . . she had reached the menopause with three daughters and no male (offspring)

Notes

(i) As the examples show, *alguno*, placed after the noun, may be used as an emphatic variant of *ninguno*: *en momento alguno* = *en ningún momento* 'at no moment at all'. See the note to 9.4.1a for details.

(ii) When *ninguno* is the subject of a verb, person and number agreement seems to be optional when the pronoun appears: *Ninguna de nosotras tiene/tenemos marido* 'None of us women has/have a husband', *Ninguno de vosotros habéis/ha traído el libro* 'None of you has/have brought the book'.

If the personal pronoun is omitted, the verb ending must make the meaning clear: *Ninguno hemos dicho eso* 'None of us said that', *¿No salisteis ninguna anoche?* 'Didn't any of you girls go out last night?' (compare *¿No salió ninguna anoche?* 'Didn't any of the girls go out last night?').

(iii) If *ninguno* is a direct or indirect object and is placed before the verb, the redundant pronoun agrees with the accompanying noun or pronoun: *A ninguno de ellos los conozco* 'I don't know any of them', *A ninguno de nosotros nos quiere dar el dinero* 'He doesn't want to give the money to any of us'.

23.5.6 *Nunca* and *jamás*

Both mean 'never' or, in certain sentences, 'ever'. *Jamás* is somewhat stronger and less usual than *nunca*. It is usually a synonym of *nunca*, but see note (i). The combination *nunca jamás* is strongly emphatic.

Both require a double negative construction when they follow the verb phrase to which they refer: *Nunca viene* = *No viene nunca* 'He never comes', *Nadie viene jamás* 'No one ever comes'.

No sale nunca/jamás de casa

He never goes out of the house

No tiene dinero y tampoco siente
nunca/jamás su carencia
Eso no lo volveré a hacer nunca jamás
¿Has oído nunca/jamás que un elefante
volase/volara? (see note (ii))

He has no money, nor does he ever feel
the lack of it
I'll never ever do that again
Have you ever heard of an elephant
flying?

Notes

(i) *Jamás* cannot appear after comparisons: *ahora más que nunca* 'now more than ever', *Trabaja menos que nunca* 'He's working less than ever', *Está más guapo que nunca* 'He's more handsome than ever'.

(ii) In rhetorical questions inviting the answer 'no' *jamás/nunca* means 'ever': *¿Se vio jamás/nunca tal cosa?* 'Was such a thing ever seen?', *¿Se ha oído jamás/nunca que un hombre mordiera a un perro?* 'Who ever heard' (lit. 'was it ever heard') that a man bit a dog?' Compare non-rhetorical question: *¿Has estado alguna vez en Madrid?* 'Were you ever in Madrid?'

23.5.7 Apenas

'Hardly', 'scarcely', 'barely', 'as soon as'.

The variant *apenas si* is found in literary style for the meanings 'only' and 'scarcely'. It is not used in time statements or when *apenas* follows the verb.

The *pretérito anterior* (*hubo llegado*, etc.) may appear in conjunction with this adverb, especially in literary styles, though it is uncommon in speech. See 14.10.4 for discussion.

No te conozco apenas
Apenas (si) te conozco
En una semana apenas si cambió dos palabras
con su tío (J. Marsé, Spain)
Apenas llegamos/hubimos llegado cuando
empezó a llover
hace apenas seis años

I hardly know you
I hardly know you
In the course of a week she barely
exchanged two words with her uncle
We had scarcely arrived when it started
raining
barely six years ago

Notes

(i) *No bien* (in Argentina and perhaps elsewhere also *ni bien*) is an alternative: *No bien se hubo marchado/se marchó cuando . . .* 'He'd barely left when . . . '.

Nomás (see 23.2.5) may also be used in Latin America to mean 'scarcely'.

(ii) *Nada más* is a colloquial alternative in time statements: *Nada más llegar, pasé por su despacho* 'As soon as I arrived, I dropped in at his office', *Lo haré nada más llegue* 'I'll do it as soon as I arrive'.

23.5.8 En mi vida, en toda la noche, en absoluto

The phrases *en mi vida/en la vida*, 'in my life', *en toda la noche* 'in the whole night', *en absoluto* 'absolutely not' are occasionally used as negatives:

En mi vida le/lo he visto (or No le/lo he visto
en mi vida)
En toda la noche he podido dormir
—¿Te molesta? —En absoluto

I've never seen him in my life
I've not been able to sleep the whole
night
'Does it bother you?' 'Absolutely not/not
at all'

En toda la noche as a negative phrase is rather old-fashioned: *No he podido dormir en toda la noche* is more normal. *En absoluto* may have a positive meaning in Latin America: *Considero que esos términos enunciados en absoluto han de*

relativizarse (H. Guglielmi, Argentina) 'I consider that these terms, (which are) stated in an absolute way, should be relativized'.

23.5.9 *Tampoco*

'Not . . . either', 'nor', 'neither' (cf. French *non plus*). It is the opposite of *también* 'also'.

As with other negative particles, it requires a double negative construction if it follows a verb phrase: *Tampoco creo en los ovnis* = *No creo en los ovnis tampoco* 'Nor do I believe in UFOs'/'I don't believe in UFOs either':

—¿Tienes la llave? —No. —Yo tampoco . . .	'Do you have the key?' 'No.' 'Nor do I . . .'
<i>Tampoco dice nada a nadie</i>	Nor does he say anything to anyone
<i>Ellos tampoco hicieron ningún comentario</i>	They didn't make any comment either

Ni or *y* can precede *tampoco*: *Me dijo que no le gustaba el vino, y/ni tampoco la cerveza* 'He told me he didn't like wine or beer'. As this example shows, *ni* can only be combined with *tampoco* if a negative statement precedes.

24

Interrogation and exclamations

Frequent errors in interrogative or exclamatory sentences are: confusion between *qué* and *cuál*, failure to write accents on interrogative or exclamatory pronouns and adverbs, omission or wrong position of the upside-down question mark and exclamation mark, and mistakes in the choice between *qué* and *lo que* in indirect questions.

24.1 Spelling

The interrogative pronouns and adverbs are:

<i>¿cómo?</i>	how?	24.7
<i>¿cuál?</i>	which?/what?	24.3
<i>¿cuándo?</i>	when?	24.8
<i>¿cuánto?</i>	how many/much?	24.6
<i>¿dónde?</i>	where?	24.9
<i>¿para qué?</i>	what for?	24.10
<i>¿por qué?</i>	why?	24.10
<i>¿qué?</i>	what?	24.4
<i>¿quién?</i>	who?	24.5

The accent marks an important feature of pronunciation, i.e. that the interrogative and exclamatory forms are stressed words. Compare *Yo sé que quiere comprar* and *Yo sé **qué** quiere comprar* 'I know that he wants to buy', 'I know *what* he wants to buy'.

24.2 Word order in interrogative sentences

When a sentence or clause begins with one of the above interrogative words, Verb-Subject word order is used:¹

¿Qué hizo usted?

What did you do?

¿Cómo se llama tu hermana?

What's your sister called?

Word order in interrogative sentences is discussed more fully at 37.2.2.

¹ Although in Cuba constructions like *¿Qué usted hizo?* are commonly heard. See note to 37.2.2.

24.3 Cuál

24.3.1 Basic uses of cuál

Its basic meaning is 'which?', i.e. 'which one?' of a set:

<i>¿Cuál prefieres?</i>	Which one do you prefer?
<i>¿A cuál prefieres?</i>	Which (person) do you prefer?
<i>¿A cuál de los tres se refiere usted?</i>	To which of the three are you referring?

¿Cuál? is appropriate in cases where choice is involved, but one would say *Han venido algunos de tercero, pero no sé quiénes* 'Some of the third year have come, but I don't know which/who'.

24.3.2 Translating 'what is/are/were?', etc.

When translating sentences like 'What's the motive?', 'What's the difference?' one normally uses the phrase *¿Cuál es/era la diferencia?* (or *¿Qué diferencia hay/había?*). This is because such sentences basically mean 'which, of the various possible motives, is the motive?', 'which of the possible differences is the difference?'

¿Qué es? literally means 'what thing?' or 'what kind of thing?', so it must be used when asking the definition of something's nature, as in 'What (kind of thing) is democracy?', 'What (kind of thing) is Vermouth?'.
Examples:

<i>¿Cuál es el problema?</i> (* <i>¿Qué es el problema?</i> is not Spanish)	What's the problem?
<i>¿Cuál es su impresión de los acontecimientos?</i>	What is your impression of the events?
(but <i>¿Qué hora es?</i>)	What's the time?)
<i>¿Cuál fue el motivo del crimen?</i>	What was the motive of the crime?
<i>Ya hay bastante desolación como para poder ver . . . cuáles son los deberes del hombre</i> (E. Sábato, Argentina)	There is already enough desolation for us to be able to see what man's duties are

Compare

<i>¿Qué es la vida?</i>	What is life?
<i>¿Qué es su hermana?</i>	What is his sister? (i.e. what does she do?)
<i>¿Qué griterío es ése?</i>	What's that shouting?

Note

¿Cuál es su nombre? means 'Which one is your name?' and *¿Cuál es la fecha?* means 'Which one's the date?'. *¿Cómo se llama?* = 'What's your name?', *¿A qué fecha estamos?*/*¿A cuántos estamos?*/*¿Qué fecha es hoy?* = 'What's the date?'. But cf. *¿Cuál es la fecha de la Batalla de Waterloo?* 'What's the date of the Battle of Waterloo?'

24.3.3 Cuál: dialect differences

In Spain and in some parts of Latin America *cuál* is rarely used adjectivally (i.e. directly before a noun): *¿Qué chicas vienen esta noche?* 'Which girls are coming tonight?', not *¿Cuáles chicas vienen esta noche?* However, sentences like the latter are common in many parts of Latin America:

<i>?No sé a cuáles asuntos se refiere</i> (Chile, from Kany, 70; <i>¿Qué asuntos?</i>)	I don't know what matters he's referring to
<i>?—Detenga a ese hombre! —¿Cuál hombre?</i> (Honduras, <i>ibid.</i> , i.e. <i>¿Qué hombre?</i>)	'Arrest that man!' 'What man?'

?¿Gatos? ¿Cuáles gatos? (C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue; Spain ¿Qué gatos?) Cats? What cats?

Sentences like *¿Cuál sombrero prefieres?* may occasionally be heard in Spain, but learners of European Spanish should say *¿Qué sombrero prefieres?* or *¿Cuál de los sombreros prefieres?* or simply *¿Cuál prefieres?*.

24.4 Qué

For the conjunction *que* see 33.4. For the relative pronoun *que*, see Chapter 35.

24.4.1 Basic uses of *qué*

¿Qué? means ‘what?’, ‘what sort of?’, but not in sentences like *¿Cuál es el problema?* ‘What’s the problem?’, for which see 24.3.2.

(a) *Qué* as a pronoun

<i>¿Yo qué gano trabajando para ese negrero?</i>	What do I gain by working for that slave driver?
<i>No sé qué decirte</i>	I don’t know what to say to you
<i>Discutían sobre qué iban a decirle a Andrés</i>	They were arguing about what they were going to say to Andrés
<i>Por cierto, ¿qué fue de Antonio?</i>	By the way, what became of Antonio?

(b) *Qué* as an adjective (see 24.3.3 for the Latin-American use of *cuál* in this context)

<i>¿A qué párrafo te refieres?</i>	Which paragraph are you referring to?
<i>¿Con qué medios podemos contar?</i>	What means can we count on?
<i>Me pregunto en qué situación estará ahora</i>	I wonder what situation he’s in now

Notes

(i) *¿Qué?* is a familiar alternative for the more refined *¿cómo?* when a repetition is required: —*María es muy respondona.* —*¿Qué?* (polite *¿cómo?*)? “Maria answers back a lot.” “What?” (i.e. what did you say?).

(ii) *El qué* may occasionally be used as an interrogative, presumably to make clear that ‘what?’ is meant rather than ‘I beg your pardon’: —*Eso es extraño.* —*¿El qué?* “That’s odd.” “What is?” —*Se le olvidó traer el Malibu.* —*¿El qué?* “He forgot to bring the Malibu.” “The what?”.

24.4.2 *Qué* and *lo que* in indirect questions

Either *qué* or *lo que* are possible except immediately before an infinitive, when *qué* is required and *lo que* may sound uneducated:

<i>Sé de lo que te hablo</i> (C. Fuentes, Mexico dialogue)	I know what I’m talking to you about
<i>Ni sé qué piensa y tampoco sé lo que pienso yo</i> (E. Sábato, Argentina, dialogue)	I don’t know what he thinks, and I don’t know what I think either
<i>No sé qué hacer</i> (not * <i>No sé lo que hacer</i>)	I don’t know what to do
<i>Pregúntale qué lo que tiene</i>	Ask him what he’s got
<i>No sé lo que voy a hacer</i>	I don’t know what I’m going to do

24.4.3 *Qué*: idiomatic uses

The following are noteworthy: *¿Qué tal?* ‘How are you?/How are things?’,

² Mexicans say *mande* for *¿Cómo?*

¿Qué tal estás? 'How are you?', *¿Qué te parece?* 'What do you think of it?', *¿A santo de qué haces eso?* 'What on earth are you doing that for?', *¿A mí qué?* 'What do I care?', *¿Y qué?* 'So what?'

24.4.4 Translating 'What a . . . !'

Qué is used without a following article to translate 'what a . . . !' in exclamations:

<i>¡Qué vida ésta!</i>	What a life!
<i>¡Qué día más/tan hermoso!</i>	What a lovely day!
<i>¡Qué cara!</i>	What a nerve/cheek!

A following adjective is preceded by *más* or *tan*:

<i>¡Qué pareja más/tan moderna!</i>	What a modern couple!
<i>¡Qué libro más/tan aburrido!</i>	What a boring book!
<i>¡Qué nevera más/tan estúpida ésta/esta!</i>	Isn't this a stupid refrigerator!

Qué de . . . is a rather old-fashioned alternative for *cuánto* in exclamations:

<i>¡Qué de cosas/Cuántas cosas tengo que contarte!</i> (familiarily <i>La de cosas que tengo que contarte</i>)	What a lot of things I've got to tell you!
---	--

Note

Use of *cómo* in this context is an archaism that survives in Latin America: *¡Cómo somos desgraciadas las mujeres!* (Spain *¡Qué desgraciadas somos las mujeres!* 'How unhappy we women are!', *¡Cómo es difícil vivir!* (= *¡Qué difícil es vivir!*) 'How difficult living is!'. (Argentine and Uruguayan examples from Kany, 342-3.) J. M. Lope Blanch, (1991), 13, notes that this construction is used by all social classes in Mexico. It is not used in Spain.

The colloquial *cómo . . . de* is common on both continents: *¡Cómo estás de guapa!* 'Aren't you attractive!', *Pero ¡Cómo está de gordo!* 'My, isn't he fat!'

24.5 Quién

For *quien* as a relative pronoun see Chapter 35. For *quien* as a nominalizer (e.g. *quien dice eso . . .* 'people who say that . . .') see Chapter 36.

Quién/quienes translates 'who'/'whom' in direct and indirect questions:

<i>¿Quién ha sido?</i>	Who was it?
<i>¿Sabes en quién estoy pensando ahora?</i>	Do you know who(m) I'm thinking of now?
<i>¿Sabes quiénes van a estar?</i>	Do you know who is going to be there?

Notes

(i) Historically *quien* had no plural, and popular speech often uses the singular for the plural, e.g. *¿Sabes quién (quienes) son?* 'Do you know who they are?'. This construction, frequent in older literature, should not be imitated.

(ii) *Quién* plus the imperfect subjunctive translates 'if only . . .'. See 16.15.2.

24.6 Cuánto

Cuánto may function as a pronoun/adjective or as an adverb. In the former case it agrees in number and gender with the noun; in the latter case it is invariable.

(a) 'How much', 'how many'

<i>¿Cuánto es?</i>	How much is it?
<i>¿Cuánta mantequilla queda?</i>	How much butter is left?
<i>¿Cuántos vienen?</i>	How many are coming?
<i>No ha dicho cuánta gasolina quería</i>	He didn't say how much petrol/US 'gas' he wanted
<i>¿Cuánto han trabajado?</i>	How much have they worked?

(b) In exclamations, 'how much!', 'what a lot!'

In exclamations *cuánto* is shortened to *cuán* before adverbs or adjectives other than *más*, *menos*, *mayor*, *menor*, *mejor*, *peor*. However, although it is not yet quite extinct in educated speech, *cuán* is nowadays usually found only in flowery journalese, and *qué*, or *lo* + adjective or adverb (the latter discussed at 7.2.2) are more usual:

<i>¿Cuántas veces (no) te lo habré dicho!</i>	How many times have I told you!
<i>¿Cuánta falta le hace a este niño alguien que le enderece!</i>	How much this child needs someone to keep him on the straight path!
<i>¿Cuánto más trágico!</i>	How much more tragic!
<i>¿Cuánto mejor estarías así!</i>	How much better you'd be like that!
<i>Ella misma se sorprendió de cuán lejos estaba de su vida (G. García Márquez, Colombia)</i>	She herself was surprised at how far he was from her life

Notes

(i) In the comparative phrases *cuanto más/menos . . . más/menos* 'the more . . . the more' 'the less . . . the less', *cuanto* is not used exclamatorily and does not take an accent. See Chapter 5 for further discussion of this construction.

(ii) *Cuanto* may be used as a relative pronoun equivalent to *todo lo que*: *Dime cuanto sabes* = *Dime todo lo que sabes* 'Tell me everything you know'.

24.7 Cómo

'How' in direct and indirect questions and in exclamations.

<i>¿Cómo te llamas?</i>	What's your name?
<i>¿Cómo quieres que me peine?</i>	How do you want me to do my hair?
<i>No sé cómo hacerlo</i>	I don't know how to do it
<i>¿Cómo está el mundo!</i>	What a state the world is in!
<i>¿Cómo llueve!</i>	Look how it's raining!
<i>¿Cómo le dejas ir solo al cine a ese niño?</i>	How can you let that child go to the cinema on his own?

24.8 Cuándo 'when'

Little need be said about this word in direct and indirect questions: *¿Cuándo fue eso?* 'When was that?', *No sé cuándo llegarán* 'I don't know when they'll arrive'.

When it is not a question word, *cuando* (no accent) may introduce relative clauses, see 35.12, or it may be a subordinator often requiring the subjunctive, see 16.12.6. For 'whenever' see 16.13.6. For the use of *cuando* in cleft sentences, e.g. *fue entonces cuando . . .* 'it was then that . . .' see 36.2.

It may also occasionally function as a preposition meaning 'at the time of': *Nos casamos cuando el terremoto* 'We got married at the time of the earthquake'.

24.9 *Dónde* ‘where’

This word should be differentiated from *¿Adónde?*, which means ‘where to?’ and is optionally used with verbs of motion, cf. *¿Adónde van ustedes?* or *¿Dónde van ustedes?*. Only *¿Dónde?* can be used when no motion is involved: *¿Dónde estamos?*, not **¿Adónde estamos?*.

When it is not a question word, *donde* (no accent) may introduce relative clauses, see 16.14.3 and 35.10, where the difference between *donde* and a *donde* is discussed. For ‘wherever’ see 16.13.8. For *donde* in cleft sentences, e.g. *fue allí donde . . .* ‘it was there that . . .’ see 36.2.

Donde may mean ‘at the house of’ in some countries, especially Chile, Peru, Ecuador and Central America: *Voy donde Miguel* = *Voy a casa de Miguel*; the construction is heard in regional popular speech in Spain. *Lo de* has the same meaning in Argentina: *Voy a lo de Miguel*.

24.10 *Por qué, para qué*

Por qué ‘why’ must be distinguished in spelling and pronunciation from *porque* ‘because’. *Para qué* ‘what for?’ must be distinguished from *para que* ‘in order to’.

In questions *para qué* stresses intention, *por qué* stresses cause, and the difference is the same as between ‘what for?’ and ‘why?’: *¿Para qué vamos a cambiarlo si todo está bien?* ‘What are we changing it for if everything’s ok?’, *¿Por qué se incendió la casa?* ‘Why did the house catch fire?’ (not *para qué* or ‘what for?’). Statistically *por qué* is much more frequent and can often – but not always – replace *para qué*.

25

Conditional sentences

25.1 General

Conditional sentences may be very varied in structure, but the commonest patterns are:

(a) Open conditions: *Si viene me quedo/quedaré* 'If he comes I'll stay', *Si han llegado, me quedaré* 'If they've arrived I'll stay'.

(b) Remote conditions: *Si viniera/viniese, me quedaría/quedaba* 'If he came/were to come, I would stay'.

(c) Unfulfilled conditions: *Si hubiéramos/hubiésemos tenido más dinero, habríamos/hubiéramos comprado la casa* 'If we had had more money we would have bought the house'.

(d) Fulfilled conditions: *Si llegaba temprano comíamos a las doce* 'If he arrived early we had lunch at twelve', *Si dijo eso, comprendo que su hermana se haya enfadado* 'If he said that, I understand his sister getting cross'.

One point can hardly be overstressed: *si*, in the meaning of 'if', is never followed by the present subjunctive except in one rare construction. See 25.8.1 for details.

25.2 Open conditions

Open conditions are so called because fulfilment or non-fulfilment of the condition are equally possible. The subjunctive is not used in open conditions and the tense pattern is the same as in English:

(a) *Si* + present + present:

Si tenemos que pagar tanto no vale la pena

If we have to pay so much it's not worth it

. . . *si (el elitismo) significa que selecciona sus miembros en razón de su aptitud, todas las universidades del mundo son elitistas*

. . . if elitism means that it selects its members according to their ability, every university in the world is elitist

(M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)

(b) *Si* + present + future (or present with future meaning):

Si el contrato no está mañana en Londres, no hay trato

If the contract isn't in London by tomorrow, the deal's off

Si llueve me quedo/quedaré en casa

If it rains I'll stay at home

(c) *Si* + past tense + present or future, normally only possible when the subject of the verb in the main clause is not yet sure about the facts described in the if-clause:

<i>Si han contestado ya, no les escribiré</i>	If they've already answered, I won't write to them
<i>Si terminaron la semana pasada nos queda poco por hacer</i>	If they finished last week there isn't much left for us to do
<i>Si llevaba minifalda su madre estará enfadadísima</i>	If she was wearing a miniskirt her mother will be really cross

(d) Si + present + imperative

<i>Si queréis ver el desfile, salid al balcón</i>	If you want to see the parade, go out on to the balcony
---	---

(e) In reported speech referring to the past, the imperfect or pluperfect indicative appear in the if-clause, and the conditional (or colloquially the imperfect indicative) in the main clause.

This is also very common in 'indirect style', i.e. where the text reports someone's unspoken thoughts, e.g. '(He knew that) if it rained everything would be spoilt' (*Sabía que*) *si llovía se estropearía todo*:

<i>(Me dijo que) me pagaría si había terminado</i>	(He told me) he'd pay me if I'd finished
<i>Dijo que la operarían si tenía algún hueso roto</i>	She said that they'd operate on her if she had any broken bones
<i>Si la policía la detenía, ya escarmentaría</i> (M. Vázquez Montalbán; Spain, unspoken thoughts)	If the police arrested her, that would teach her a lesson
<i>Si no actuaba pronto, Gianni terminaría por resquebrajarse, por acabar en una clínica psiquiátrica</i> (S. Pitol, Mexico)	If she didn't act promptly Gianni would break down, end up in a psychiatric clinic

The prevalence of this type of construction in passages of indirect speech sometimes encourages students to believe that the pattern *si* + imperfect indicative + conditional is also the usual way of forming remote conditions in Spanish, as in French and English, e.g. 'if I had money' *si j'avais de l'argent . . .*, Spanish *si tuviera/tuviese dinero . . .*. The next section should correct any such misconception.

(f) The imperfect indicative therefore sometimes also appears in the if-clause when some phrase like 'I think that . . .', 'What I say is' has been omitted: (*Lo que yo digo es*) *si sabía que sólo era por mi dinero, claro que no me casaría/casaba* '(What I say is that), if I knew that it was only for my money, obviously I wouldn't get married'.

25.3 Remote conditions

In these 'remote' conditions the verb in the if-clause is in the imperfect subjunctive (*-ra* or *-se* form); the verb in the other clause is normally in the conditional.

There are two types, which correspond to the English sentences 'If you paid now it would cost less' and 'If I were rich I'd buy you a house'. The first is fulfillable and is merely a slightly hypothetical variant of an equivalent open condition: there is little difference between *Si pagaras ahora, costaría menos* 'If you paid now it would cost less' and *Si pagas ahora, costará menos* 'If you pay now it will cost less', except that the probability appears more remote in the first example.

In the second type the condition is contrary to fact and the subjunctive construction is the only possible one in Spanish: *Si yo fuera/fuese rico, te compraría una casa*, 'If I were rich, I'd buy you a house' (but I'm not).

English and French-speaking students must avoid using the imperfect indicative in the if-clause (cf. *si j'étais riche . . .*):

Esto quiere decir que si usted realizase seis viajes con estas 15.000 ptas ahorraría más de 4.000 ptas (RENFE advertisement; or *realizara*. Present indicative possible)

Si supieras hacer el nudo como todos los chicos de tu edad, no te tendrías que quejar (I. Aldecoa, Spain, dialogue; *supieses* also possible)

Si por lo menos se pudiera limitar el contrabando de cocaína, se ahorrarían muchas muertes (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue; or *pudiese*)

This means that if you made six journeys with these 15,000 ptas, you would save more than 4,000 ptas

If you knew how to make a knot like all the boys of your age, you wouldn't have to complain

If one could at least limit cocaine smuggling, a lot of deaths would be avoided

Notes

(i) Use of the conditional in the if-clause is regional or substandard, but it is common in Navarre, the Basque Provinces and neighbouring parts of Spain, in popular Argentine speech and no doubt elsewhere, e.g. *?Si no estaría preso, no lo habrían soltado* 'If he wasn't arrested they wouldn't have let him go' (M. Puig, Argentine dialogue, for *estuviera/estuviese*). This should not be imitated.

(ii) For use of the *-ra* subjunctive form as an alternative for the conditional, see 25.6 and 14.7.5.

25.4 Unfulfilled conditions

These refer to a condition in the past that was not fulfilled. The verb in the if-clause is in the pluperfect subjunctive (*hubiera/hubiese hablado*, etc.) and the verb in the main clause is usually in the perfect conditional of the perfect (*habría/hubiera hecho*, etc.):

Si él hubiera/hubiese tenido dinero, hubiera/habría saldado la cuenta . . . si no hubiera sido por las contracciones del estómago, se habría sentido muy bien (J. Cortázar, Argentina, dialogue)

If he'd had money he'd have settled the bill

. . . had it not been for the stomach cramps, he'd have felt fine

Notes

(i) There are a number of simplified forms of this type of conditional sentence that are often heard in spontaneous speech but are banned from writing or non-spontaneous language and are rather informal for foreign speakers: *Si lo llego a saber, te habría llamado* 'If I'd found out, I'd have rung you', *Si sé que estás enfermo, no vengo* 'If I'd known you were ill, I wouldn't have come', *Dio un tropezón y si se descuida, se cae* 'He slipped and nearly fell down'.

(ii) *Si + imperfect + imperfect* can be heard in popular speech in Argentina *Si me tocabas, te mataba con mi cuchillo* (E. Sábato, Argentina, dialogue) 'If you'd touched me, I'd have killed you with my knife'. One also hears *si + imperfect + pluperfect subjunctive* *Si hace unos años yo veía* (for *hubiera visto*) *en la playa a alguien con esto, hubiera pensado: ese tipo es loco* (Mafalda cartoon, Argentina; *está loco* in Spain) 'If I'd seen someone a few years ago on the beach with that, I'd have thought that guy's crazy'.

25.5 Imperfect indicative for conditional

The imperfect indicative commonly replaces the conditional tense in the main clause in spontaneous speech on both sides of the Atlantic (the subject is further discussed in 14.5.2). This usage is perfectly acceptable in relaxed European Spanish but it is not allowed in formal styles and it may be less tolerated in some American republics than in others:

Desde luego, si yo fuera hombre, no me casaba . . . (L. Goytisolo, Spain, dialogue)

Si de pronto tuvieses/tuviera la certeza de que no voy a vivir más que dos días, de seguro me iba (for iría) a confesar (M. de Unamuno, *Diario íntimo*, Spain)

Si no fuera por vosotros iba yo a aguantar a vuestro padre . . . (set expression: *iría* not used)

Obviously, if I were a man I wouldn't marry . . .

If I suddenly found out for certain that I'd only two days to live, I'd certainly go to confession

If it weren't for you, would I put up with your father?

25.6 *-ra* forms instead of the conditional

The imperfect subjunctive in *-ra* (but not, at least in careful language, the *-se* form) is a very common alternative for the conditional of the auxiliary verb *haber* and also of some other verbs. See 14.7.5 for detailed discussion:

Con él o sin él, hubiera/habría sido igual

With him or without him, it would have been the same

25.7 Fulfilled conditions

These are not really conditions at all but merely an elegant way of saying 'the reason why'/'just because'/'whenever'. The verb is never in the subjunctive:

Si me estaba contando todos aquellos proyectos era porque inexorablemente pensaba realizarlos (F. Umbral, Spain)

Si he tenido suerte, la culpa no es mía
Si teníamos dinero, íbamos al teatro

If he was telling me about all those plans, it was because he was inevitably intending to carry them out
It's not my fault if I've been lucky
If we had any money, we used to go to the theatre

25.8 *Si* 'if'

25.8.1 *Si*: general

Si is never followed by the present subjunctive except occasionally in formal literary style after *saber*: *No sé si sea cierto* 'I do not know whether it be true' for *No sé si es cierto*.

Ser cannot be deleted after *si*: *si es urgente* 'if urgent', *Ven antes si es posible* 'Come earlier if possible'; cf. also French *si nécessaire* 'if necessary', *si es/fulera/fuliese necesario*.

Si sometimes has a merely emphatic function: *Pero, ¡si tiene más de cincuenta años!* 'But he's more than fifty years old!'

In the phrase *apenas si* it has no function: *Apenas (si) la conocía* 'I/he/she/you barely knew her'.

25.8.2 Replacement of *si* by *como*

In informal language in type 1 (open) conditions, *como* with the present or imperfect subjunctive may replace *si*. This is usually confined to threats and warnings:¹

<i>Como vuelvas a hablarme de mala manera, me voy</i>	If you talk to me in a nasty way again, I'm going
<i>Como no me lo pagues, me lo llevo</i>	If you don't pay me for it, I'll take it away
<i>Me dijo que como no se lo pagara/pagase, se lo llevara/llevaría</i>	She told me that if I didn't pay her for it, she would take it away

Como with the indicative = 'since'. See 33.5.2:

<i>Como no me lo has pagado, me lo llevo</i>	Since you've not paid me for it, I'm taking it away
--	---

25.8.3 Replacement of *si* by *de*

De + infinitive may replace *si* and a finite verb in an if-clause. This is only possible if the verb in the if-clause and the verb in the subordinate clause are in the same person. One can say *De haberlo sabido, me hubiera quedado en casa* 'Had I known, I'd have stayed at home' (both first-person), but not **De llover, me quedo en casa* 'If it rains I'm staying at home' (*Si llueve me quedo/quedaré en casa*):

<i>De seguir así acabarás haciéndote comunista</i>	If you carry on like that, you'll end by becoming a communist
<i>De no haberse hecho la cirugía estética en ese instante a Mária, se le arrugaría la nariz</i> (J. Asís, Argentina)	If Mária hadn't had plastic surgery at that moment, her nose would have become wrinkled

When used thus, *de* must have a hypothetical or future reference. One can say *De llover, lloverá mucho* 'If it rains it'll rain a lot', but not **De ser guapa, es mi novia* 'If she's beautiful, she's my girlfriend' (timeless statement). *De* cannot therefore be used in type 4 (fulfilled) conditional sentences (25.7).

25.9 Other ways of expressing conditions

(a) The gerund may sometimes have a conditional force: *Hablando de esa manera no consigues nada* 'You'll get nowhere by talking like that' = *Si hablas de esa manera . . .* 'If you talk like that . . .'. See note to 20.4.2 for more examples.

(b) A negative if-clause may be introduced by some phrase meaning 'unless', e.g. *a menos que*, *a no ser que* (see 16.12.7b):

<i>Debe estar en casa, a no ser que haya ido al bar con sus amigos</i>	He must be at home, unless he's gone to the bar with his friends
--	--

(c) 'If' may be expressed by some phrase meaning 'on condition that', e.g. *con tal (de) que*, *a condición de que* (see 16.12.7a):

<i>Compraré los riñones, con tal (de) que estén frescos</i>	I'll buy the kidneys provided they're fresh
---	---

¹ J.M. Lope Blanch (1991) p.146, says that *como* + subjunctive is unknown in Mexican Spanish.

(d) *Al + infinitive* (see 18.7) properly means 'on . . .-ing', but is sometimes seen with a conditional meaning:

?*Al ser verdad esta afirmación se tendrá que pensar todo* If this claim is true, everything will have to be re-thought

This is not acceptable in Spain and is probably a Latin-American regionalism. It is stylistically dubious.

(e) *A + infinitive* can have conditional force in a few cases:

A no ser por mí, le hubieran matado Had it not been for me, they'd have killed him

A juzgar por lo que dicen . . . (= si se juzga por lo que dicen . . .) To judge by what they say . . .

A decir verdad, no me cae bien (= Si digo la verdad . . .) To tell the truth, I don't like it/him/her/you

(f) *Por si . . .* forms conditionals of the sort translated by 'in case . . .' or some similar phrase:

Me asomé a la ventana por si venía I looked out of the window in case he was coming

Compramos otra botella por si acaso We'll buy another bottle just in case
Por si esto fuera poco, también me han robado el reloj As if that weren't enough, they've stolen my watch too

25.10 Miscellaneous examples of conditional sentences

The following are translations of typical English conditionals (some taken from Quirk, Greenbaum *et al.* (1972), 11.32):

Had he known, he wouldn't have protested	<i>Si lo hubiese/hubiera sabido no habría/hubiera protestado</i> or <i>De haberlo sabido . . .</i>
Were that the only reason, there'd be no problem	<i>Si ésa fuera/fuese la única razón, no habría problema</i>
If possible, come earlier	<i>Si es posible, ven antes</i> (not * <i>si posible . . .</i>)
I won't compromise, even if he offers/were to offer me money	<i>No transijo, incluso/aun si me ofrece/ofreciera/ofreciese dinero</i>
It'll be impossible unless you change your attitude	<i>Será imposible, a menos que/salvo que/la no ser que cambies de actitud</i>
Provided no objection is raised, the meeting will be held here	<i>Con tal (de) que no haya ninguna objeción, la reunión se celebrará aquí</i>
Should it turn out to be true, things will be different	<i>Si resulta ser verdad, las cosas serán distintas</i>

25.11 Translating 'if I were you . . .'

If I were you, I'd keep quiet *Yo de usted/Yo que usted/Si yo fuera usted, me callaría/callaba*

Yo que usted is the older Peninsular formula; *yo de usted* is a Catalanism which is now widespread, although censured by manuals of good usage²: *Yo de ti lo dejaba* 'If I were you I would leave it'.

² E.g. Santamaría *et al.* (1989), 309.

26

Pronominal verbs

26.1 General

Pronominal verbs are those that are accompanied by an object pronoun (i.e. *me, te, se, nos, os, se*) which is of the same person as the subject of the verb, for example *Yo me lavo* 'I'm washing (myself)', *Vais a cansaros* 'You're going to tire yourselves/get tired', *(Él) se ha marchado* 'He's gone/left'. The usual object pronouns are used with such verbs, except in the third person (*usted, ustedes* included) which uses the invariable pronoun *se* for both singular and plural.

A very large number of Spanish verbs can be pronominalized, even intransitive verbs like 'to be' and 'to die'. Older grammars sometimes call such forms as *me voy, se cayó, se lava* 'reflexive verbs', but this name is very misleading. Reflexive verbs are those in which the subject performs an action on him/herself, 'I'm washing myself', 'He praises himself', but only a small percentage of pronominal verbs are actually reflexive. The range of meanings associated with pronominalized verbs is illustrated in the following list, which is not exhaustive:

(a) Reflexive (see 26.2)

<i>Se afeita</i>	He's shaving (himself)
<i>No te conoces (a ti mismo/a)</i>	You don't know yourself

(b) Reciprocal (plural verbs only; see 26.3)

<i>Ustedes se insultan mucho</i>	You insult one another a lot
<i>Se querían tanto</i>	They loved one another so much

(c) To denote accidental or unplanned actions (26.6.2 and 26.6.4)

<i>Me caí en la calle</i>	I fell down in the street
<i>El agua se sale por aquí</i>	The water's leaking here

(d) To emphasize the point of departure of a movement (see 26.6.2)

<i>Se salió de la reunión</i>	He walked out of the meeting
<i>Se han ido de casa</i>	They've left home

(e) To show that an action concerns or interests the subject alone (see 26.2, (note iv))

<i>Yo sé lo que me hago (Spain only)</i>	I know what I'm doing
<i>Tú sabrás lo que te dices (Spain only)</i>	You may know what you're saying

(f) To make a transitive verb intransitive (26.5)

<i>La puerta se abrió</i>	The door opened
<i>No te enfades</i>	Don't get angry

(g) To stress the 'totality' of an action (26.6.3)

Se fumó un paquete entero
Se leyó el libro en una hora

He smoked a whole packet
 He read the (whole) book in one hour

Other verbs that have pronominal counterparts, e.g. *reír/reírse* 'to laugh', *morir/morirse* 'to die', *ganar/ganarse* 'to earn'/'to win', *estar/estarse* 'to be', *esperar/esperarse* 'to wait'/'to expect', *volver/volverse* 'to become'/'to return'/'to turn back', *conocer/conocerse* 'to know', *escapar/escaparse* 'to escape', are best studied as separate lexical items. The more common of them are discussed at 26.6.4, and all of them should appear in good dictionaries of Spanish. Some pronominal verbs, e.g. *regresarse* 'to return', *enfermarse* 'to get ill' occur in Latin America but are rejected in Spain; see 26.7.

Verbs that translate the English 'become', e.g. *ponerse*, *hacerse*, *volverse*, *convertirse en*, are often pronominal verbs. They are discussed in Chapter 27.

The pronoun *se* also appears in the following third-person constructions:

The pronoun *se* also appears in the following third-person constructions:

Se sirven comidas

Meals (are) served

Se ha dicho que . . .

It has been said that . . .

Se vive mejor en España

One lives better in Spain/Life's better in Spain

Se le considera poco honrado

He's considered to be dishonest

Se detuvo a tres contrabandistas

Three smugglers were detained

These passive or impersonal uses of *se* are discussed separately at 28.4-28.6.

Throughout the following discussion it must be remembered that very often the meaning of a pronominal verb is given by the context. Thus out of context *Se critican* means 'They criticize themselves', 'They criticize one another', or 'They are criticized'. Such ambiguities are almost always resolved by reference to the background of the sentence or by appealing to common sense.

26.2 Reflexive meaning of pronominal verbs

This use, not the most common, shows that an action is done by the subject to/for him/herself: *Se está duchando* '(S)he's having a shower', *Os alabáis mucho* 'You praise yourselves a lot', *Me voy a comprar otro traje* 'I'm going to buy (myself) a new suit'. Four important features of this reflexive meaning are:

- (a) The subject is always animate (since a door doesn't usually wash or open itself);
- (b) The pronoun may stand for the direct or the indirect object: *Me estoy afeitando* 'I'm shaving', *Me estoy quitando la camisa* 'I'm taking my shirt off';
- (c) The action can be voluntary or accidental;
- (d) The original verb is always transitive.

Examples:

Se está lavando

He/She's washing

Me corté con una lata

I cut myself with a tin

Se ha roto una pierna

He's broken a leg

¡Qué bien te peinas!

How well you do your hair!

¡Cuidado, que te vas a salpicar!

Careful, you're going to get splashed!

Se daban crema para el sol

They were putting suncream on (or reciprocal 'They were putting suncream on each other')

Se mató en un accidente

He got killed in an accident¹

Notes

(i) The subject in these constructions may be emphasized by use of the subject pronoun, sometimes reinforced by the appropriate form of *solo* 'alone' or *mismo*: *Primero vistió a la niña y luego se vistió ella* 'First she dressed the child, then she dressed herself', *No eches la culpa a nadie, te has manchado tú solo/mismo* 'Don't blame anyone else, you stained yourself', *La niña se pone los zapatos ella sola* 'The little girl puts on her shoes all by herself'.

If a preposition is used (including personal *a*) emphasis is obtained by using the appropriate prepositional form of the personal pronoun (*mí/ti/sí/nosotros/vosotros/sí*) plus the correct number and gender of *mismo*: *Se decía a sí misma que no servía para nada* 'She told herself he was good for nothing', *Me odio a mí mismo/misma* 'I hate myself', *Nos mentimos a nosotros mismos con frecuencia* 'We lie to ourselves frequently'. *Mismo* is not used if the preposition is *para*: *Se decía para sí que no valía la pena* 'She told herself that it wasn't worthwhile'. When the preposition is *con*, the pronouns *mí*, *ti* and *sí* combine with it to form *conmigo*, *contigo* and *consigo*; see 11.5.2.

(ii) Verbs expressing hurt take either the prepositional or non-prepositional form: *Se hace daño él mismo/a sí mismo* 'He's hurting himself', *Te perjudicas tú mismola ti mismo* 'You're damaging yourself'.

(iii) With a few common verbs the pronominal form may mean 'to get something done' as well as 'to do something for or to oneself': *Se va a hacer un abrigo rojo* 'She's going to make herself a red coat'/'She's going to get a red coat made', *Se ha construido un chalet* 'He built himself a house (either himself or to his specifications)', *Me voy a cortar el pelo* 'I'm going to have my hair cut'/'I'm going to cut my hair'.

Ambiguity can be removed by the appropriate use of the personal pronoun followed by *mismo* or *solo*: *Se construyó la casa él mismo/solo* 'He built the house himself', *Te puedes hacer una permanente tú mismola sola en casa* 'You can give yourself a perm at home'. In some cases it is very unlikely that the action will actually be performed by the subject: *Me voy a operar de cataratas* 'I'm going to have an operation for cataracts', *Si te duele esa muela, debías sacártela* 'If that tooth's aching you ought to have it out' (or, less likely, 'you ought to take it out').

(iv) In colloquial language in Spain, but not in Latin America, a reflexive form may emphasize that the action concerns only the subject: *Tú sabrás lo que te dices* 'I guess you know what you're talking about', *Yo me entiendo* 'I know what I'm referring to'/'I know what I'm talking about'.

26.3 Reciprocal meaning of pronominal verbs

A plural pronominal verb may have a reciprocal meaning, i.e. show that an action is done to or for one another. *El uno al otro/los unos a los otros* can be added to make clear that the reciprocal meaning is intended: compare *Se entristecen* 'They grow sad'/'They make themselves sad'/'They make one another sad', and *Se entristecen los unos a los otros* 'They make one another sad':

Nos escribimos periódicamente
Hace años que no se hablan

We write to one another regularly
They haven't been talking to one another for years

¹ Not 'He committed suicide', merely that he himself was performing the action that killed him. One could not say **Se mató en una riña* for 'He got killed in a fight': *Le mataron en una riña*.

*Pasó mucho tiempo sin que nos
viésemos/viéramos*
Os conocisteis en Córdoba
Siempre se ponen pegas

We didn't see one another for a long time
You met in Córdoba
They're always finding fault with one
another

If one subject is feminine and the other masculine, masculine pronouns are used: *Pedro y María se quieren mucho el uno al otro* 'Pedro and María love one another a lot'.

26.4 Pronominal verbs with inanimate subjects

This construction corresponds to the English intransitive form – *La ventana se rompió* 'The window broke' – or to the colloquial construction with 'got' – *Se ha quemado el pastel* 'The cake got burnt'. For obvious reasons, inanimate subjects are usually third person:

La gripe se cura sola
El barco se hundió
Se ha roto el cable
Las manzanas se están pudriendo
Las suelas se gastan de tanto andar

Flu gets better of its own accord
The boat sank
The cable broke
The apples are rotting/going rotten
Soles wear out from so much walking

Note

Melte/le/nos/os/les are used after *se* to indicate ownership or to disclaim responsibility for an action: *Se me ha roto la jarra* 'My jug has got broken' (it may or may not be the subject's fault), *Se le ha perdido la sortija* 'Her ring has got lost' (ditto).

26.5 Pronominalization and intransitivity

A large number of transitive verbs have pronominal intransitive counterparts. The pronominal form detransitivizes the transitive verb, or more accurately, blocks off the possibility of understanding a verb as transitive. Compare:

<i>abrir</i>	to open (transitive)
<i>acabar</i>	to finish (transitive)
<i>acostar</i>	to put someone to bed
<i>casar</i>	to marry (transitive)
<i>cerrar</i>	to close (transitive)
<i>despertar</i>	to wake someone up
<i>dormir</i>	to put somebody to sleep (also 'to sleep')
<i>enamorar</i>	to make someone fall in love
<i>meter</i>	to put in
<i>perder</i>	to lose
<i>preocupar</i>	to worry somebody
<i>presentar</i>	to introduce people
<i>tirar</i>	to throw, to pull
<i>vaciar</i>	to empty (transitive)

<i>abrirse</i>	to open (intransitive)
<i>acabarse</i>	to end (intransitive)
<i>acostarse</i>	to go to bed
<i>casarse</i>	to get married
<i>cerrarse</i>	to close (intransitive)
<i>despertarse</i>	to wake up
<i>dormirse</i>	to go to sleep
<i>enamorarse de</i>	to fall in love with
<i>meterse</i>	to get in, to interfere
<i>perderse</i>	to get lost
<i>preocuparse</i>	to worry
<i>presentarse</i>	to appear unexpectedly
<i>tirarse</i>	to jump
<i>vaciar</i>	to empty (intransitive)

Sometimes the pronominal form of the verb is radically different in meaning:

cambiar to change
correr to run

cambiarse de to change clothes/house
correrse to be ashamed/to 'come'
(taboo, vulgar; Spain)

<i>desenvolver</i>	to unwrap	<i>desenvolverse</i>	to get ahead, to be good at something
<i>despedir</i>	to see someone off, to fire/sack	<i>despedirse de</i>	to take one's leave, say goodbye
<i>empeñar</i>	to pawn, pledge	<i>empeñarse en</i>	to insist on doing something
<i>gastar</i>	to spend	<i>gastarse</i>	to wear out
<i>llevar</i>	to take, to wear	<i>llevarse</i>	to take with one, to steal
<i>mudar</i>	to change bedclothes	<i>mudarse</i>	to move house, to change one's clothes
<i>negar</i>	to deny	<i>negarse a</i>	to refuse to do something
<i>oponer</i>	to contrast two views	<i>oponerse</i>	to oppose

Sometimes pronominalization can also change the meaning of intransitive verbs, e.g. *parecer* 'to seem', *parecerse* 'to look like'; *suceder* 'to happen', *sucederse* 'to follow one another'. Further examples appear in the next section.

Many pronominal intransitive verbs have no transitive counterparts (at least in normal language), cf. *acatarrarse/constiparse* 'to catch a cold', *arrepentirse* 'to repent', *abstenerse* 'to abstain', *apropiarse de* 'to take possession of', *atenerse a* 'to limit oneself to', *atragantarse* 'to choke', *atreverse* 'to dare', *comportarse* 'to behave', *dignarse* 'to deign to', *equivocarse* 'to make a mistake', *inmiscuirse* 'to interfere', *quejarse* 'to complain', *suicidarse* 'to commit suicide', which appear only in the pronominal form.

26.6 Pronominalization: miscellaneous verbs

26.6.1 Pronominalization and changes of meaning: general

Pronominalized forms of verbs may also express subtle and usually unpredictable modifications of the sense of the non-pronominal verb. Compare *Bajó del árbol* and *Se bajó del árbol* 'He came down from the tree' (the difference between the two is barely translatable) or *Leyó el libro* and *Se leyó el libro* 'He read the book', where the pronominal form stresses the action of reading the *whole* book.

Several points must be made about this construction:

- (a) It is confined to a finite number of common transitive and intransitive verbs. The fact that *comer* 'to eat' has a pronominal form *comerse* 'to eat up'/'to eat every morsel of' does not mean that a verb like *consumir* 'to consume' also has a pronominal form. For this reason these pronominal verbs must be learnt separately.
- (b) Some of the pronominalized forms are more characteristic of spoken language and may be replaced by the simple form in formal styles.
- (c) The pronominal form often expresses an optional extra nuance. One tends to say *Se fumó veinte cigarrillos en una hora* 'He smoked twenty cigarettes in an hour', but this does not rule out the slightly less expressive and less usual *Fumó veinte cigarrillos en una hora*. On the other hand, there are many cases in which the pronominal forms cannot replace the simple forms. One cannot say **Se fuman mucho* for *Fuman mucho* 'They smoke a lot' (because *fumarse*, in this construction, always requires a specific direct object).
- (d) It is not guaranteed that all of the examples given below are used in Latin America. There are also some pronominal verbs that are current in the Americas but are avoided in Spain (see 26.7 for examples).

(e) The nuance added by pronominalization is sometimes very subtle. Ability to distinguish pairs like *bajar/bajarse* 'to get out'/'to descend', *salir/salirse* 'to leave'/'to walk out', *llegar/llegarse* 'to arrive'/'to approach', *morir/morirse* 'to die' is the mark of the true master of idiomatic Spanish.

(f) The existence of a pronominal form does not eliminate the possibility that the verb can be pronominalized for one of the reasons discussed earlier in this chapter. Out of context a form like *Se encontraban* may mean 'They found by chance', 'They found themselves', 'They found one another' or 'They were found'. Context will clarify the issue.

26.6.2 Pronominal verbs of motion

Many common verbs of motion acquire an extra nuance in the pronominal form. The pronominal form may:

(a) draw attention to the point of departure as opposed to the destination, cf. *ir* 'to go somewhere', *irse* 'to go away from somewhere';

(b) suggest that an action is untimely, accidental or unplanned, e.g. *caer* 'to fall', *caerse* 'to fall over/down'; *salir* 'to leave'/'to come out', *salirse* 'to leave unexpectedly', 'to leak' (of liquids, gases). Sometimes both nuances are combined.

However, in some cases the effect of pronominalization is not easily classifiable. Examples (verbs presented in alphabetical order):

Bajar/bajarse 'to go down', *subir/subirse* 'to go up'

The difference between the two verbs is sometimes difficult to grasp. As far as 'getting on/into' and 'getting off/out of' some kind of vehicle is concerned, the forms are usually interchangeable, although informal language prefers the pronominal form, especially if unplanned exit/entry is involved:

Iba a bajar(me) en la Plaza de la Revolución, pero me voy a bajar aquí
—*Bájate de ahí, papacito —le decía. —Es peligrosísimo. No te vayas a caer y te lastimes* (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)

I was getting out at Revolution Square, but I'm going to get out here
'Come down from there, papa', she was telling him. 'It's dangerous. Don't fall and hurt yourself'

In both the previous examples the non-pronominal form could have also been used but it is less often heard. Ordinary going up and down (e.g. stairs, lifts) requires the non-pronominal form unless reference is made to a whole set of stairs. (See 26.6.3 for a more detailed discussion of the latter construction):

Espérame abajo/arriba que bajo/subo enseguida
Subía siempre las escaleras lentamente
(*Se*) *subió las escaleras de un tirón* (the whole flight of stairs)

Wait for me downstairs/upstairs, I'll be down/up in a minute
He always used to go upstairs slowly
She rushed upstairs without stopping

Other meanings require the pronominal form: *El gato se subió al árbol* 'The cat ran up the tree', *Se subía por las paredes* 'She was climbing up the wall' (with rage, not literally).

Notes

(i) *Bajar(se)/subir(se)* can also be used colloquially as transitive verbs meaning 'to take up', and 'to take down': *Bája(te) estos tiestos al jardín* 'Take these flower pots down to the garden'.

(ii) The non-pronominal form is used for the meanings 'to increase', 'to diminish': *Los precios suben/bajan* 'Prices go up/down'.

Caer/caerse 'to fall'/'drop'

Caer is used to stress point of departure or arrival: *El meteoro cayó del cielo* 'The meteor fell from the sky', *El tigre cayó sobre su presa* 'The tiger fell on its prey', *El avión cayó aquí* 'The plane fell here'. It is also used when the point of departure is taken for granted: *Caía una lluvia fuerte* 'Heavy rain was falling'.

Caerse suggests accidental falling ('falling over', 'falling down'):

<i>Se cayó de la mesa</i>	It fell off the table (accidentally)
<i>Me caí por unas escaleras</i>	I fell down a flight of stairs
<i>¡Que no se te caiga el paquete!</i>	Don't drop the parcel!
<i>No tiene donde caerse muerto</i> (figurative)	He hasn't got a cent (lit. 'He has nowhere to drop dead on')
<i>Se le cayó el alma a los pies</i> (figurative)	He suddenly became intensely depressed (lit. 'His soul dropped to his feet')

Entrar/entrarse 'to enter'

Entrar 'to enter' is by far the more common form. The status of *entrarse* is problematic: many Peninsular speakers reject it altogether, although it is heard in popular speech and is quite common in Latin America to emphasize point of departure:

<i>Salió al balcón pero volvió a entrar(se) porque hacía frío</i> (most Peninsular speakers reject <i>entrarse</i>)	She went out on to the balcony but came in again because it was cold
--	--

Escapar/escaparse 'to escape'

The pronominal form is the more usual. The non-pronominal form is used only in figurative meanings: *escapar con vida* 'to escape alive', *escapar del peligro* 'to escape danger', *escapar a la justicia* 'to escape justice'. Manuel Seco also mentions *escapar a la calle* 'to take to the street'. But *Los prisioneros se escaparon* 'The prisoners escaped'.

Ir/irse 'to go'/'go away'

The difference between the two generally coincides with the difference between 'to go' and 'to go away', French *aller/s'en aller*, Italian *andare/andarsene*:

<i>Vamos a casa de Pepe</i> (destination stressed)	We're going to Pepe's house
<i>Me voy a casa de Pepe</i> (departure stressed)	I'm off to Pepe's house
<i>Vete</i> (point of departure stressed)	Go away

Llegar/llegarse 'to arrive'/'approach'

Llegar means 'to arrive' and is by far the more common form. *Llegarse* means 'to approach', 'to pop over to':

<i>Llegamos a Madrid</i>	We arrived in Madrid
<i>Llégate/Acércate a la tienda de enfrente</i>	Go over to the shop/(US) 'store' opposite

Marchar/marcharse 'to march'/'leave'

Marchar means 'to march' and *marcharse* means 'to leave a place':

<i>¡Mira cómo marchan los soldados!</i>	Look at the soldiers marching!
<i>Me marchó/Me voy</i>	I'm leaving

Pasar/pasarse 'to pass'

As a verb of motion, both forms mean 'to pass'/'to pass by'/'to pass over'. (For *pasar* as a transitive verb meaning 'to pass time', see 26.7.)

Pasar suggests normal motion. It is also used when playing cards, *Paso* 'I pass':

<i>cuando pasó la frontera</i>	when he crossed the frontier
<i>La carretera pasa por el pueblo</i>	The road goes through the village

Pasarse suggests unwanted passage:

<i>Se pasó de la raya</i>	He went beyond the mark/overdid it
<i>No te pases</i>	Don't go too far/Don't overdo it

Salir/salirse 'to leave'

Salir means 'to go out'/'to leave' without further implications. *Salirse* implies untimely or unexpected departure or, applied to inanimates, accidental motion:

<i>Salimos del cine cuando terminó la película (intentional)</i>	We left the cinema when the film ended
<i>Nos salimos del cine porque la película era muy violenta (unexpected)</i>	We left the cinema (before the end) because the film was very violent
<i>El agua sale por aquí (intended)</i>	The water comes out here (where it should)
<i>El grifo se sale (accidental)</i>	The tap's leaking
<i>El tren se salió de la vía (accidental)</i>	The train ran off the tracks

Saltar/saltarse 'to jump'

Saltar is the normal word for 'to jump'. It can also mean 'jump over', but *saltarse* is replacing it in informal language in this last meaning and it can also be used metaphorically:

<i>Saltaban de alegría</i>	They were jumping for joy
<i>Se saltaban los semáforos</i>	They were jumping the traffic lights
<i>Se saltó/Saltó la hoguera</i>	He jumped over the bonfire

Subir/subirse (see bajar/bajarse)**Venir/venirse² 'to come'**

Venirse suggests 'to come away from somewhere'. Applied to inanimates it implies accidental or unexpected coming. *Venir* simply means 'to come to a place':

² *Venirse* also has the obvious sexual meaning in vulgar usage in Latin America.

Ha venido de París a pasar unos días
(destination stressed)
Se ha venido de París porque no puede ver a los franceses (point of departure stressed)
Dijiste sus nombres cuando te viniste
(J. Cortázar, Argentine, dialogue; probably emphasizes permanent departure from somewhere else)
¿Por qué no vienes conmigo? (destination stressed)
¿Por qué no te vienes conmigo? (point of departure stressed)
Mira la tormenta que se nos viene
(accidental)

She's come from Paris to spend a few days
He's come here from Paris because he can't stand the French
You mentioned their names when you came here

Why don't you come with me?

Why don't you (leave him/her/this place and) come with me?³
Look at the storm that's coming down on us

***Volver/volverse* 'to return'**

Volver means 'to return'. It is also used for intangible things, e.g. happiness, summer, fine weather. *Volver a* + infinitive is the most usual way of saying 'to do something again'. It is discussed at 32.6a.

Nunca volveré a aquella casa
Has vuelto muy moreno
Fue a París, se entrevistó con el presidente, y volvió a Londres

I'll never return to that house
You've come back very sun-tanned
He went to Paris, talked to the President and returned to London

Volverse may mean 'to turn round', 'to turn back halfway', 'to return before time' (unplanned return):

Se volvió hacia ella
Me volví antes de llegar

He turned to (face) her
I turned back before arriving

Note

In Latin America, *regresar/regresarse* is used in the same way: *Helen se había regresado a Puebla* (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue, Spain *se había vuelto* or *había regresado*).

Some countries, e.g. Colombia, also use *devolverse* for 'to return': . . . *pero se había devuelto del Camino Real* (G. García Márquez, Colombia) ' . . . but he'd turned back on the Highway'. *Devolver* (transitive) means 'to give back' or 'to vomit' in standard Spanish.

26.6.3 Pronominal verbs of consumption, perception, knowledge

A curious optional function of the pronominal form of these transitive verbs is to emphasize the totality of an act of consuming, perceiving or knowing. Thus one says *Como pizza* (but not necessarily whole pizzas), but, optionally (though usually), *Me comí una pizza* 'I ate a (whole) pizza'.

The verb must have a direct object that must refer to a specific item or quantity:

Bebe mucho vino
Se bebió un litro de vino
Nos comimos un par de bolsas King size de patatas fritas (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain)

He drinks a lot of wine
He drank a litre of wine
We finished off a couple of King-size bags of crisps/(US) 'chips'

³ One could also say *¿Por qué no te vienes conmigo a pasar unos días?* 'Why don't you come and spend a few days with me?', with the implication 'rather than stay there'. Also *¿Te vienes al cine con nosotros?* 'Are you coming to the cinema with us?'

<i>Tardó mucho en comerse el helado</i>	It took her a long time to eat the ice cream
<i>¡No comas de pie!</i>	Don't eat standing up!
<i>No deberías fumar</i>	You shouldn't smoke
<i>Se fuma tres paquetes al día</i>	He smokes three packets a day
<i>Ando mucho</i>	I walk a lot
<i>(Me) anduve cincuenta kilómetros</i>	I walked 50 kilometres
<i>Aprendo francés</i>	I'm learning French
<i>Me aprendí todo el capítulo en una hora</i>	I learnt the whole chapter in an hour
<i>Sabe mucho</i>	She knows a lot
<i>¿Te sabes los verbos irregulares?</i>	Do you know the irregular verbs?
<i>Conozco Valencia</i>	I know Valencia
<i>Me conozco Valencia de cabo a rabo</i>	I know Valencia inside out
<i>Toma somníferos para dormir</i>	He takes sleeping pills to sleep
<i>Tómate un somnífero</i>	Take a sleeping pill
<i>Pero aquella noche se sintió tan humillado que se tomó el brandy de un golpe (G. García Márquez, Colombia⁴)</i>	But that night he felt so humiliated that he drank his brandy down in one go
<i>Trago mal</i>	I can't swallow properly
<i>Se lo ha tragado</i>	He's swallowed it
<i>Vi a tu cuñada</i>	I saw your sister-in-law
<i>Se vio todo el museo en diez minutos</i>	He saw the whole museum in ten minutes
<i>Lee muchas novelas</i>	She reads a lot of novels
<i>Vas a tener que releerte las obras completas [de Shakespeare] para que nos entendamos (C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue)</i>	You're going to have to re-read the complete works of Shakespeare so that we can understand one another

Notes

(i) *Conocerse* applied to people acquires a nuance: compare *Conozco a Miguel* and *Me conozco a Miguel* 'I know Miguel'/'I know Miguel (and his little tricks)'.

(ii) *Desayunarse* is old fashioned in Spain but is often used in Latin America: *Me he desayunado un café/con un café* 'I had a coffee for breakfast', cf. Spain *Desayuno fruta y cereales* 'I have fruit and cereals for breakfast'.

26.6.4 Miscellaneous pronominal verbs with special meanings

Pronominalization adds nuances to a number of other verbs, of which the following are frequently encountered:

***Aparecer/aparecerse* 'to appear'**

Aparecer means 'to appear' without further nuances. *Aparecerse* is used of apparitions:

La revista aparece todos los días
Se le apareció la Virgen

The journal appears every day
The Virgin appeared before him

***Callar/callarse* 'to be quiet'**

Callar/callarse are in theory interchangeable except when the subject is inanimate, in which case the pronominal form cannot be used. In practice *callarse* is used more often animate with subjects.

⁴ In Latin America *tomar* 'to take' is often assumed to mean 'to drink alcohol': *Si ha tomado, no maneje* (Mexican street sign) 'If you've been drinking, don't drive' (*manejar* = *conducir* in Spain).

<i>El niño se calló en cuanto le dieron el biberón</i>	The little boy stopped crying as soon as he was given a bottle
<i>La música calló de repente</i>	The music suddenly stopped

Crecer/crecerse 'to grow'

Crecer means to grow in size. *Crecerse* means to grow in worth or value:

<i>La hierba crece mucho con tanta lluvia</i>	The grass grows quickly with so much rain
<i>Hay personas que se crecen con el peligro</i>	There are people who grow stronger/more confident when they are in danger

In parts of Latin America *crecerse* means 'to be brought up': *Yo me crecí* (Spain *me crié*) *en Bolivia*, 'I was raised in Bolivia'.

Creer/creerse 'to believe'

The pronominal form usually implies unfounded belief:

<i>Creo en ella</i>	I believe in her
<i>Ése se cree que habla francés</i>	He thinks he speaks French
<i>Se cree todo lo que le dicen</i>	He believes everything they tell him
<i>Yo (me) creía que él había llegado</i>	I thought he had arrived

Note

Idiom: *Se lo tiene creído* 'He has a high opinion of himself', (British) 'He fancies himself'.

Dar/darse 'to give'

Dar 'to give'/'to show'; *darse* 'to abandon oneself to something'/'to take up'/'to happen':

<i>Dámelo</i>	Give it to me
<i>¿Qué película dan?</i>	Which film are they showing?
<i>Desde entonces se dio a la bebida</i>	From then on he took up drinking
<i>Este caso se da con mucha frecuencia</i>	This happens very often

Dejar/dejarse 'to leave'

Dejar translates 'to let' and 'to leave' (in the sense of 'abandon'). *Dejarse* emphasizes accidental leaving behind:

<i>Deja tu maleta aquí</i>	Leave your suitcase here
<i>Cuando dejó el ejército . . .</i>	When he left the army . . .
<i>Me he dejado el dinero en casa</i>	I've left my money at home

Note

This use of *dejarse* is apparently confined to Spain. Latin-Americans informants said *Dejé la plata . . .* 'I left my money . . .',⁵ which in Spain would imply deliberate leaving.

Encontrar/encontrarse 'to find'

The pronominal form means 'to find something by chance':

⁵ In Spain *la plata* = 'silver' and *el dinero* = 'money'.

*Encontré el libro que buscaba
Me encontré una moneda de oro
Todo el dinero es igual. Yo lo agarro de
donde me lo encuentro (A. Mastretta,
Mexico, dialogue)*

I found the book I was searching for
I found a gold coin
All money's the same. I grab it where I
find it

Esperar 'to wait'/'hope'

Esperar translates 'to wait for'. Both *esperar* and *esperarse* are used for 'to expect' and 'to wait':

*¿(A) qué estás esperando?
Te estamos esperando
Eso no (me) lo esperaba yo
Hay que esperar(se) a que te atiendan*

What are you waiting for?
We're waiting for you
I wasn't expecting this
One has to wait to be served

Espera and *espérate* 'wait' seem to be interchangeable in the imperative.

Estar/estarse 'to be'

Estar means 'to be', and its use is discussed in Chapter 29.

The pronominal form *estarse* is used:

(a) to form the imperative of *estar*:

*¡Estate quieto!
¡Estese tranquilo!*

Sit still!
Be calm/Don't worry!

This is standard usage in Spain, but it is not universal:

*Paso a cambiarme como a las ocho. Por favor,
está lista (C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue)*

I'll be home around eight to get changed.
Please be ready

(b) to express obligatory or deliberate being in a place. The translation is usually 'to stay':

*Se tuvo que estar en casa porque vinieron sus
tíos
Me estuve estudiando toda la noche (from
María Moliner)
. . . y aquí que se esté para lo que se ofrezca
(A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)*

He had to stay at home because his aunt
and uncle came
I stayed up all night studying
and let him remain here in case anything
turns up

Quedarse would have been possible in all but the last example.

Ganar/ganarse 'to win/earn'

Ganar is used in the phrase *ganar mucho/poco dinero* 'to earn a lot/very little money', *¿Cuánto ganas?* 'How much do you earn?' It also means 'to win'. *Ganarse* can sometimes add more emphasis to the amount earned. It is also used for metaphorical meanings or when the way of earning one's living is mentioned.

Imaginar/imaginarse 'to imagine'

Imaginar is a transitive verb meaning 'to conceive of'/'to invent a new idea'. *Imaginarse* means 'to imagine' in the sense of 'suppose' or 'picture':

<i>Imaginó un nuevo modo de hacerlo</i>	He conceived of/invented a new way of doing it
<i>Te puedes imaginar lo que yo estaba pensando</i>	You can imagine what I was thinking
<i>Me los imagino divirtiéndose</i>	I imagine them amusing themselves

Llevar/llevarse 'to carry'

Llevar means 'to wear', 'to take' or 'to carry'. *Llevarse* means 'to take away':

<i>Voy a llevar el traje al tinte</i>	I'm going to take my suit to the cleaner's
<i>No se te olvide llevarte los libros</i>	Don't forget to take the books with you
<i>Llevaba un abrigo negro</i>	She was wearing a black coat

Mejorar/mejorarse 'to improve'

Mejorar as a transitive verb means 'to make better'. As an intransitive verb it means 'to improve'. *Mejorarse* can only mean 'to get better' from an illness and it is not used everywhere in Spain:

<i>La situación ha mejorado</i>	The situation has improved
<i>(Se) ha mejorado mucho/Está mucho mejor</i>	He's a lot better

Morir/morirse 'to die'

Both translate 'to die', but the pronominal form denotes natural death, especially a gradual death: *Su madre se está muriendo* 'His mother is dying'. *Morir* is used for accidental or deliberate death: *(Se) murió de un ataque al corazón* 'He died from a heart attack', *Murió en un accidente de avión* 'He died in a plane accident'. In formal written Spanish *morir* is more usual for all kinds of death:

<i>Ha muerto el primer ministro</i>	The Primer Minister has died
<i>La propia Tránsito Arias se murió convencida de que . . . (G. García Márquez, Colombia)</i>	Tránsito Arias herself died convinced that . . .

Ocurrir/ocurrirse 'to happen'/'occur'

Ocurrir means 'to happen'. *Ocurrirsele a alguien algo* means 'to occur to one', 'to have a sudden idea':

<i>Esto lleva ocurriendo desde hace algún tiempo</i>	This has been happening for some time
<i>Se me ha ocurrido una idea genial</i>	I've had a brilliant idea

Olvidar/olvidarse(de)/olvidársele algo a uno 'to forget'

Olvidar usually implies intentional forgetting:

<i>No puedo olvidarla</i>	I can't forget her
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Olvidarse de implies accidental forgetting:

<i>Se han olvidado de que en la soledad la tentación es más grande (C. Fuentes, Mexico)</i>	They've forgotten that temptation is greater in solitude
<i>¿Te has olvidado de mí?</i>	Have you forgotten me?/Have you left me out?

Olvidársele algo a uno, also implies accidental forgetting and it can be used before nouns or infinitives. The verb agrees in number with the thing forgotten:

<i>Aquel día se me habían olvidado las llaves</i> (lit. 'The keys had forgotten themselves on me')	That day I had forgotten my keys
<i>Se me habían olvidado otras cosas</i> (J. Ibarguengoitia, Mexico, dialogue)	I'd forgotten other things

Parecer/parecerse 'to seem'

Parecer means 'to seem'; *parecerse a* means 'to look like':

<i>Parece cansada</i>	She seems/looks tired
<i>Se parecen a su madre</i>	They look like their mother

Pasar/pasarse 'to spend time'

For the use of these two as verbs of motion, see 26.6.2.

Pasar means 'to spend time somewhere' or 'to pass' applied to time:

<i>Pasó la noche en casa de su hermano</i>	He spent the night in his brother's house
<i>Pasaron tres horas</i>	Three hours passed

Pasarse means 'to spend time doing something':

<i>Se pasa horas mirando por la ventana</i>	He spends hours gazing out of the window
<i>Podíamos pasarnos la vida sin verlos</i> (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)	We could spend our lives without seeing them

Quedar quedarse 'to stay'/'remain'

Quedar means 'to remain', *quedar en* 'to agree to do something':

<i>Queda por ver si lo hará</i>	It remains to be seen whether he/she'll do it
<i>No queda sal</i>	There's no salt left
<i>La casa te ha quedado bien</i>	You've done the house up very well

Quedarse means 'to stay':

<i>Me quedaré unos días contigo</i>	I'll stay a few days with you
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For other meanings of *quedarse* see 27.3.6 and 28.2.6a.

Reír/reírse 'to laugh'

Both mean 'to laugh'. *Reírse* is the more common form; *reír* is rather literary. However *reírse* implies spontaneous laughter (the more usual kind), so it cannot be used when the cause of merriment comes from outside as in *El gas me hizo reír* 'The gas made me laugh', *Ya los haré reír* 'I'll make them laugh'. 'To laugh at' is *reírse de*:

<i>Se rió de su propia risa</i> (G. García Márquez, Colombia)	She laughed at her own laughter
<i>Todos se reían de él</i>	They all made fun of him

Temer/temerse 'to fear'

Temer usually means 'to be afraid' in the literal sense of 'to fear', especially with a direct object; *temer/temerse* are interchangeable only in the sense of 'to suspect'/'to be worried that':

<i>Teme a su padre</i>	He's afraid of his father
<i>(Me) temo que va a llegar tarde</i>	I'm afraid she's going to be late

See 16.9 for further discussion of *temer/temerse*.

Traer/traerse 'to bring'

Both translate 'to bring', but *traerse* is used to emphasize the agent of the action and to indicate that the things mentioned belong to at least one of the speakers. Some native speakers see a difference between

<i>¿Qué quieres que te traiga?</i>	What do you want me to bring you? (meaning something bought)
<i>Si vas al supermercado no se te olvide traer la leche</i>	Don't forget to bring the milk

and

<i>¿Qué quieres que me traiga?</i>	What do you want me to bring back? (meaning something belonging to one or both of the speakers)
<i>Cuando vayas al garage tráete las herramientas</i>	When you go to the garage bring back the tools with you

Traer can also mean 'to wear':

<i>Traía un traje precioso</i>	She was wearing a lovely dress
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Note

Some pronominal verbs are being replaced by the non-pronominal form, as in the case of *entrenar* for *entrenarse* 'to train', which has become common in recent years in spite of the grammarians' complaints, or *encarar* for *encararse con* 'to face up to (a problem)':

<i>Entreno mañana en el gimnasio</i>	I'll train tomorrow at the gymnasium
<i>Arco 93 trata de encarar la crisis del mercado de arte (El País)</i>	Arco 93 is trying to face up to the crisis in the art market

26.7 Latin-American pronominal verbs

Most pronominal forms used in Spain are also current in Latin America, but some pronominal verbs heard in Latin America sound quaint, rustic or simply wrong to Spaniards. The following selection is not exhaustive, and not all the forms are current in educated speech in all countries (the Peninsular equivalent is given in brackets):

<i>crecerse</i>	to be brought up (<i>criarse</i>)
<i>devolverse</i>	to return (<i>volver, regresar</i>)
<i>enfermarse</i>	to get ill/(US) 'sick' (<i>enfermar</i>)
<i>heredarse</i>	to inherit (<i>heredar</i>)

(*heredar* in México means 'to leave to someone in a will'):

Estaba seguro de su alcurnia y pudo heredársela entera a su hija (A. Mastretta, México)

He was sure of his pedigree and managed to leave it in his will to his daughter

<i>prestarse</i>	to borrow ⁶ (<i>pedir prestado</i>)
<i>recordarse</i>	remember (<i>recordar, acordarse</i> ; see footnote to 18.2.3)
<i>regresarse</i>	to return (<i>volver, regresar</i>)
<i>robarse</i>	to steal (<i>robar</i>)
<i>soñarse</i>	to dream (<i>soñar</i>)
<i>verse</i>	to look: <i>Te ves muy guapa</i> (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue; Spain <i>Qué guapa estás . . .</i> 'You look very pretty')
<i>vomitarse</i>	to vomit (<i>vomitarse, devolver</i>)

26.8 Interpretation of pronominal verbs with inanimate subjects

A third-person pronominal verb may also be interpreted as a passive: *Se construyó en España* means the same as *Fue construido en España* 'It was built in Spain' (see 28.4 for more details).

An occasional difficulty with sentences containing pronominal verbs, for example *Se abrió la puerta*, is therefore that of deciding whether they are to be interpreted as intransitive, i.e. 'the door opened', or passive 'the door was opened'. This problem only arises with certain verbs which have well-established pronominal intransitive forms and have inanimate subjects, e.g. *abrir/labrirse* 'to open', *cerrar/cerrarse* 'to close', *encontrar/encontrarse* 'to find'/'to be located', *esconder/esconderse* 'to hide' and others which will be found listed in good dictionaries. Most transitive verbs, e.g. *construir* 'to build', *derribar* 'to fell', *operar* 'to operate' do not have intransitive counterparts, so confusion is hardly possible.

The general rule for clarifying which sense is intended is as follows:

If a pronominal verb has an established intransitive meaning, e.g. *abrirse* 'to open', *encenderse* 'to light up'/'to switch on', it will usually precede the subject if the passive meaning is intended, although this position does not preclude a non-passive interpretation. Thus *La puerta se abrió* usually means 'The door opened', but *Se abrió la puerta* may mean either 'The door opened' or 'The door was opened'. Similarly:

<i>Las luces se encienden a las nueve</i>	The lights come on at nine
<i>Se encienden las luces a las nueve</i>	The lights are lit/come on at nine
<i>Tres ventanas se rompieron durante la tormenta</i>	Three windows broke in the storm
<i>Se rompieron tres ventanas durante la manifestación</i>	Three windows were broken in the demonstration

In the second of each of the foregoing examples the passive is the more likely meaning. If the verb has no intransitive possibility, then only a passive meaning is possible:

<i>Se derribaron tres árboles/Tres árboles se derribaron</i>	Three trees were felled
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⁶ In Argentina the verb used in popular speech is *empréstar*. This verb is heard in Spain but is considered substandard.

Los motivos se ignoran/Se ignoran los motivos

The motives are unknown

The foregoing points hardly constitute a hard and fast rule, and it must be remembered that complex word order rules, discussed in Chapter 37, govern the choice between sentences like *Los motivos se ignoran* and *Se ignoran los motivos* 'The motives are unknown'.

26.9 Obligatory use of *uno* as impersonal pronoun with pronominal verbs

Uno/una must be used to give an impersonal meaning to a pronominal verb since two *ses* cannot occur with the same verb:

Se muere de frío en esta casa

He/she/it's dying from cold in this house

Se muere uno de frío en esta casa

One dies from cold in this house

Cuando está así, se irrita fácilmente por cualquier cosa

When he's like that, he gets easily irritated over anything

Cuando se está así, se irrita uno fácilmente por cualquier cosa

When one is like that, one gets easily irritated over anything

For more details about the pronoun *uno* see 28.7.1.

27

Verbs of becoming

27.1 General

Spanish has no single word for the English 'to become'. The change from a state or a mood to another can often be expressed by a pronominal verb (for pronominal verbs see Chapter 26). There are also some special verbs, e.g. *ponerse*, *volverse*, *hacerse*, *llegar a ser*, *convertirse*, *quedarse*, which can in many cases translate 'to become'.

27.2 Pronominal verbs of change

An important type of pronominal verb denotes a change of mood or state with the meaning of 'to become'/'to get':

<i>aburrir</i>	to bore	<i>aburrirse</i>	to get bored
<i>alegrar</i>	to cheer someone up	<i>alegrarse</i>	to cheer up/ to be happy about something
<i>asustar</i>	to frighten	<i>asustarse</i>	to get frightened
<i>cansar</i>	to tire	<i>cansarse</i>	to get tired
<i>divertir</i>	to amuse	<i>divertirse</i>	to be amused
<i>endurecer</i>	to make hard	<i>endurecerse</i>	to grow hard/to harden
<i>enredar</i>	to entangle	<i>enredarse</i>	to get entangled
<i>entristecer</i>	to sadden	<i>entristecerse</i>	to grow sad
<i>extrañar</i>	to find something odd/to miss	<i>extrañarse</i>	to be puzzled
<i>fastidiar</i>	to annoy	<i>fastidiarse</i>	to get annoyed
<i>irritar</i>	to irritate	<i>irritarse</i>	to get irritated
<i>marear</i>	to make giddy, to annoy	<i>marearse</i>	to feel sick
<i>molestar</i>	to bother	<i>molestarse</i>	to be bothered
<i>vaciar</i>	to empty	<i>vaciarse</i>	to become empty
etc.			

Note

Some common exceptional cases of non-pronominal verbs denoting 'to become', 'to get' are: *agonizar* 'to be dying', *adelgazar* (*quedarse delgado*) 'to lose weight', *amanecer* 'to dawn', *anochecer*: *anochece* 'night is falling', *aumentar* 'to increase', *clarear* 'to grow bright', *crecer* (for *crecerse* see 26.6.4) 'to grow', *disminuir* 'to diminish', *empeorar* (Lat. Am. *empeorarse*) 'to get worse', *enfermar* (Lat. Am. *enfermarse*) 'to get ill', *enflaquecer* 'to lose weight', *engordar* (*ponerse gordo*) 'to get fat', *enloquecer* (*volverse loco*) 'to go mad', *enmudecer* 'to be silent'/'to lose one's voice', *enrojecer* 'to go red', *ensordecer* 'to go deaf', *envejecer* (also *envejecerse*) 'to grow old'/'to age' (but compare: *rejuvenecerse* 'to grow young again'), *mejorar* (*mejorarse* = 'to recover' from an illness) 'to improve', *nacer* 'to be born', *oscurecer* 'to get dark' (but *el cielo se oscurece* 'the sky grows dark'), *palidecer* 'to grow pale', *resucitar* 'to come back to life'.

Amanecer and *anocheecer* can also be used with animate subjects and objects: *Amanecí detestando mi color de pelo, mis ojeras, mi estatura* (A. Mastretta, Mexico) 'I woke up (lit. 'I dawned') hating the colour of my hair, the bags under my eyes, my height'. They can also be used impersonally with object pronouns: *Me anoheció en medio de la carretera* 'Night found me on the road'.

27.3 Special verbs meaning 'becoming'

Apart from the use of the pronominal forms discussed in the previous section, the following verbs (most, but not all themselves pronominal) are also used with various shades of meaning.

27.3.1 *Ponerse*

Ponerse is used to indicate change of mood, physical condition and appearance. The changes are usually short-lived, with the exception of *ponerse viejo* 'to get old'. Thus there is a contrast between *Se ha puesto muy pesado* 'He's become boring' (temporarily) and *Se ha vuelto muy pesado* 'He's become a bore'. There is some overlap with *quedarse* meaning 'to lose', 'to be left without' (e.g. *quedarse delgado* 'to become thin', 'to lose weight', see 27.3.6). Often there are equivalent pronominal verbs, i.e. *alegrarse* for *ponerse alegre*, *entristecerse* for *ponerse triste*, or non-pronominal ones, i.e. *engordar* for *ponerse gordo*, *enfermar* for *ponerse enfermo*.

Ponerse can be used of animate and inanimate nouns and of situations:

<i>¡Qué pesado/tonto te estás poniendo!</i>	You're becoming such a bore/a fool!
<i>Se puso/Se quedó ronco de tanto hablar</i>	He got hoarse from talking so much
<i>Con tanto como comes te vas a poner gordo (for delgado 'thin' see quedarse)</i>	You are going to get fat from eating so much
<i>Al verla se puso pálida/palideció</i>	When he saw her he went pale
<i>En poco tiempo se ha puesto muy viej/se ha aviejado mucho</i>	He's got very old in a short time
<i>¡Qué sucio se ha puesto este mantel!</i>	This table cloth has got very dirty!
<i>La situación se ha puesto insoportable</i>	The situation has got unbearable
<i>El día se ha puesto gris</i>	It's turned grey/(US) 'gray' (i.e. the weather)
<i>El tiempo se está poniendo frío</i>	The weather is getting cold

Ponerse is often used with children to indicate that they are looking bigger or handsomer than ever: *¡Pero qué guapo/grande se ha puesto este niño!* 'Hasn't this child got handsome/big!'.

27.3.2 *Volverse*

Usually translates 'to become'/'to go' and implies involuntary mental or psychological change when applied to animate subjects. It can also be used of abstract inanimate nouns and circumstances. The change is felt to be more permanent than with *ponerse*:

<i>Se volvió loco de tanto pensar</i>	He went mad from thinking too much
<i>Con la edad se ha vuelto muy de derechas</i>	He's become very right-wing with age
<i>últimamente todo se vuelven complicaciones, dificultades y disgustos (see 2.3.3 for agreement of vuelven)</i>	Recently everything has become complications, difficulties and upsets
<i>¿Dónde se volvió asesino ese chico?</i>	Where did that boy learn to be a murderer?
<i>(M. Puig, Argentina, dialogue)</i>	

See 26.6.2 for other meanings of *volver(se)*.

27.3.3 *Hacerse*

This often implies voluntary effort. It is usual for religious, professional or political changes. It can also occasionally be used of circumstances:

<i>Se hizo católico/Se convirtió al catolicismo</i>	He became a Catholic
<i>Para hacerte arquitecto necesitas saber dibujo</i>	You need to know how to draw to become an architect
<i>Se hace tarde</i>	It's getting late

Notes

(i) There is little difference between sentences like *Se está haciendo cada vez más vago* and *Se está volviendo cada vez más vago* 'He's getting lazier and lazier' except that some wilfulness is implied in the first example.

(ii) 'To become' with the meaning of 'to be appointed' is translated into Spanish as *nombrar* or *hacer*: *Le han nombrado/hecho ministro* 'He's become a Minister'.

27.3.4 *Llegar a ser, pasar a ser*

Llegar a ser is used to indicate the result of a slow and sometimes difficult change, i.e. 'to manage to become'/'to become eventually':

<i>Trabajó mucho y con el tiempo llegó a ser alguien/director general/una persona importante</i>	He worked hard and in due time he became someone/general manager/an important person
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Pasar a (ser) means 'to go on to be' and it does not imply difficulty or lapse of time: *De secretario pasó a (ser) jefe* 'From being a secretary he went on to become the boss', *De millonario pasó a mendigo* 'He went from millionaire to beggar'.

27.3.5 *Convertirse en 'to turn into'*

This verb precedes noun phrases but not adjectives. The change can be due to external circumstances:

<i>Nada más tocarle/lo el hada con la varita el príncipe se convirtió en rana</i>	As soon as the fairy touched him with her wand, the prince turned into a frog
<i>Se ha convertido en un drogadicto/un criminal</i>	He's become a drug addict/a criminal
<i>El transporte se ha convertido en un problema para todos</i>	Transport has become a problem for everybody
<i>La silla se convierte fácilmente en una escalera</i>	The chair turns easily into a step ladder

Note

'To convert to' a new belief is *convertirse a*; see also *hacerse*, 27.3.3: *No todos los que se convierten a una religión se vuelven buenos* 'Not everybody who is converted to a religion becomes good'.

27.3.6 *Quedarse*

This verb may be a verb of becoming especially when it implies loss:

(a) Implying loss, incapacity

<i>Se quedó ciego/mudo/impedido/viudo</i>	He became blind/dumb/disabled/a widow
<i>Se quedó solo en el mundo</i>	He was left alone in the world
<i>Al morir su padre se quedó sin dinero</i>	When her father died she was left without any money
<i>A pesar del frío se quedó en cueros</i>	In spite of the cold he took all his clothes off

¡Qué delgado te has quedado!
 Me he quedado helado esperándote

Haven't you got thin!
 I've got frozen waiting for you

But note *quedarse embarazada* 'to get pregnant', which does not imply loss.

(b) Other meanings

Se quitó el abrigo y se quedó con una falda

She took her coat off. She was wearing a
 grey skirt and a white blouse

gris y una blusa blanca

Se quedó atrás

He was left behind

Me quedo con este sombrero

I'll take this hat

Quédese con la vuelta

Keep the change

Me quedo en este hotel

I'll stay in this hotel

¿Te has quedado contento?

Are you satisfied now?

Me quedé convencido de que era verdad

I was convinced that it was true

*El gerente se quedó fastidiado (C. Fuentes,
 Mexico)*

The manager was irritated

See 26.6.4 and 28.2.6 for more remarks about *quedar(se)*.

Notes

(i) *Quedarse helado* can also apply to shock: *Cuando se lo dijeron se quedó helado* 'He had a terrible shock when they told him'.

(ii) In some Spanish regions *quedar* can be used instead of *quedarse* in the first three examples of (a) and also in *quedarse embarazada*.

28

Passive and impersonal sentences

28.1 General

This chapter discusses four constructions. Students who know French may find comparison with this language instructive:

- (a) **Passive with *ser*** (28.2): *Fue construido* 'It was built', *Il a été construit*;
- (b) **Passive *se*** (28.4): *Eso no se dice* 'That isn't said', *Cela ne se dit pas* or *On ne dit pas cela*;
- (c) **The 'mixed' construction with *se* and personal *a*** (28.5): *Se recibió a los embajadores* 'The ambassadors were received', *Les ambassadeurs ont été reçus*;
- (d) **Impersonal *se*** (28.6)¹: *Se entra* 'one enters', *On entre*; *Se come bien* 'One eats well', *On mange bien*.

These four constructions are used to form impersonal sentences, i.e. those in which the agent of the action is irrelevant, as in *Fue demolido el año pasado* 'It was demolished last year', *Se dice que las zanahorias son buenas para los ojos* 'They say/It's said that carrots are good for the eyes', *Se vive mejor en España que aquí* 'People live/One lives better in Spain than here'.

Passive with *ser* differs from the constructions with *se* in that the agent of the action can be mentioned: *Fue construido por los militares* 'It was built by the military'. In this case it is no longer an impersonal construction.

The example under (d) shows that Spanish differs from French in allowing the use of *se* with intransitive verbs to form an impersonal sentence, as in *es/se está . . . (on est . . .)*, *se vive . . . (on vit . . .)*, *se avanza (on avance)*. In such cases *se* can be thought of as equivalent to the French impersonal pronoun *on*, German *man*.

Less clear-cut are those sentences in which *se* seems to be used as an impersonal subject pronoun even with transitive verbs, as in *Se publicaba poco* which may mean either 'It wasn't published much' (passive) or 'People didn't publish much' (impersonal). These are discussed at 28.4. and 28.6.1.

28.2 Passive with *ser*

28.2.1 General

The passive with *ser* is formed from the appropriate tense and person of *ser*

¹ Impersonal *se* was not distinguished from passive *se* in the first edition and it is debatable whether they really are distinct constructions. However, it seems to us that it is in fact better, for explanatory purposes, to treat them separately.

'to be' and the past participle, which agrees in number and gender with the subject of *ser*:

Active

Manuel escribió la respuesta
Manuel wrote the reply
Solucionaron los problemas
They solved the problems

Passive

La respuesta fue escrita por Manuel
The reply was written by Manuel
Los problemas fueron solucionados
The problems were solved

There are several points to be made about this construction:

(a) English is unusual in allowing indirect objects to form a passive construction: 'He was given two pounds', 'They were told a tall story' – *Se le dieron dos libras, Se les contó un cuento chino*. **Él fue enviado una carta* is unintelligible for *Se le envió una carta/Le fue enviada una carta* 'He was sent a letter'.

(b) Whereas passive *se* and impersonal *se* constructions occur in ordinary speech as an impersonal form or as a substitute for the passive, the passive with *ser* is more characteristic of written or non-spontaneous language. In informal speech the passive is usually replaced by impersonal 'they': *Tres manifestantes fueron arrestados = Arrestaron a tres manifestantes* 'They arrested three demonstrators', *Fue entrevistado ayer = Le entrevistaron ayer* 'They interviewed him yesterday'. In fact some grammarians assert that the passive with *ser* is not found in spontaneous speech, but this is not completely true – assuming that the following extracts really do reflect spontaneous speech:

Ese jardín es alemán, y la película se ve que fue hecha en Alemania (M. Puig, Argentina, dialogue)
. . . *y es que traen un telegrama de Berlín que ella es invitada a filmar una gran película* (idem.)
Se trata de los papeles de mi marido . . . Deben ser ordenados antes de que muera (C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue)

That garden's German, and you can see the film was made in Germany

and the thing is they bring a telegram from Berlin (saying) she's being invited to make a big movie

It's about my husband's papers. They have to be sorted before I die

However, such examples are noticeably more common in the dialogue of Latin-American novels. The passive with *ser* is rare in spontaneous Peninsular speech.

(c) The passive with *ser* is, however, extremely common in written Spanish on both continents and probably more so in the Americas. Its increasing use is perhaps one of the most obvious developments in written and formal language in the last half century, especially in newspapers, where it may reflect rushed translations of faxes from English-language press agencies. Sentences like *Estos ejemplos son vistos como logros enormes* (C. Fuentes, Mexico) 'These examples are seen as enormous successes' would almost certainly have been written . . . *se ven como logros enormes* in the recent past, and still surprise Peninsular speakers. But the advance of this 'Anglicized' passive seems unstoppable, and it may eventually become a pervasive feature of Spanish. Until that day English-speakers should beware of a tendency to over-use it, especially in speech.

(d) If no agent is mentioned, the passive with *ser* is often identical in meaning with passive *se* (explained at 28.4): *Encontraron dos cargas explosivas que fueron*

desactivadas and *Encontraron dos cargas explosivas que se desactivaron* both mean 'They found two explosive charges which were de-activated', although the first is unambiguous whereas the second might conceivably be read as '... which de-activated themselves'. But often there is a difference of nuance which may become crucial. The passive with *ser* is less impersonal than the *se* construction in the sense that the latter completely eliminates information about the agent from the message, whereas the former does not. Thus it is probably more usual to say *El reo fue sentenciado* 'The prisoner was sentenced' than *Se sentenció al reo* since the agent (the judge) is obviously implicitly present in the message: *se sentenció* . . . almost implies 'someone sentenced the accused'. But *En el siglo II todavía se hablaba latín* 'Latin was still spoken in the second century' is more normal than . . . *el latín era hablado todavía* because the agent, in this case 'people', is too obvious or vague to be worth mentioning.

Por cannot be used with passive *se*: **El latín se hablaba por los romanos* is bad Spanish for *Los romanos hablaban latín*. This constraint reflects the impersonality of *se* and may partly explain the increasing popularity of the passive with *ser*.

(e) The passive with *ser* is more common with verbs of perfective (completed) aspect (i.e. the preterite, future, perfect, pluperfect tenses) and with the infinitive than with verbs of imperfective aspect (i.e. in imperfect, present and continuous tenses): *Fue entrevistado ayer* is normal for 'He was interviewed yesterday', *Era entrevistado ayer* is unusual or journalese. However, passive sentences in which the verb is timeless or habitual are nowadays increasingly common in writing and non-spontaneous speech, and more so in Latin America than Spain:

Los mismos ascensores son usados para el transporte de enfermos (Cambio16, Spain)
 . . . *mientras Cabinda era defendida heroicamente por los combatientes del MPLA* (Fidel Castro, speech on Angola)
Basta saber que un hombre es buscado para que todos lo vean de manera distinta (C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue)
Algunos de ellos recuerdan que no hace mucho eran corridos por la Policía (Cambio16, Spain)
El parlamento gibraltareño tiene 17 miembros, de los que 2 son puestos por el Gobierno inglés (El País, Spain)

The same lifts are used for carrying patients
 . . . while Cabinda was being heroically defended by fighters of the MPLA

It's enough to know a man's being sought for everyone to look at him in a different way

Some of them remember that not so long ago they were being chased by the police

The Gibraltarian parliament has 17 members, two of whom are appointed by the British Government

Most Peninsular informants found these sentences unnatural and preferred a *se* construction or, where the agent is mentioned, an active sentence, e.g. *los mismos ascensores se usan* . . . , *basta saber que a un hombre se le busca* . . . , *recuerdan que no hace mucho la Policía les corría* . . . , *dos de los cuales los pone* . . . , although they were prepared to tolerate the third example *era defendida heroicamente*. The fact that the example mentioning Gibraltar sounds natural if one substitutes *impuestos* 'imposed' is an indication of the difficulties surrounding the whole question of when the passive is possible.

Examples of the passive with *ser* with verbs of perfective aspect (active alternatives are shown):

<i>Fue alcanzado por una bala</i> (or <i>le alcanzó una bala</i>)	He was hit by a bullet
<i>Las muestras les serán devueltas</i> (or <i>se le devolverán las muestras</i>)	The samples will be returned to you
<i>El hijo de Pilar Ternera fue llevado a casa de sus abuelos</i> (G. García Márquez, Colombia; or <i>llevaron al hijo</i> . <i>Llevar</i> cannot be passivized with <i>ser</i> if it means 'wear')	Pilar Ternera's son was taken (i.e. carried) to his grandparent's house

Note

The difference between the true passive *La ciudad fue destruida* 'The city was destroyed' (action) and *La ciudad estaba destruida* 'The city was in a state of destruction' is discussed at 28.2.5.

28.2.2 Constraints on the passive with *ser*

The passive with *ser* is not used:

- (a) With an indirect object: *Le dieron dos regalos* 'He was given two presents', never **Fue dado dos regalos*.
 (b) Usually when the subject of *ser* is partitive, i.e. has no article: *Se venden naranjas aquí* 'Oranges for sale' but not **Naranjas son vendidas aquí* 'Oranges are sold here'.

However, sentences like *En el mercado antiguo eran vendidas manzanas y otras frutas* 'In the old market apples and other fruits were sold' may be found, especially in literary Latin-American Spanish. *Se vendían manzanas y otras frutas* is more normal.

- (c) With a present or imperfect tense to denote a single action. The Academy (*Esbozo*, 3.12.9c) says that *La puerta es/era abierta por el portero* 'The door is/was opened by the doorman' can only refer to a habitual or timeless event.

This rule does not apply to all styles. Journalists sometimes use the imperfect for single events – *Momentos después era asesinado por un terrorista* 'Seconds later he was murdered by a terrorist' (see 28.2.1e and 14.5.6 for discussion) – and the historic present may function like a preterite: *El 22 de junio de 1941 la Unión Soviética es invadida por ejércitos alemanes* 'On June 22 1941, the Soviet Union was (lit. 'is') invaded by German armies'.

- (d) With a large number of verbs, and for no obvious reason.

Many verbs do not allow the passive with *ser*. These are more numerous than in English, which has similar constraints, e.g. 'The window was broken by Jill' but not **The stairs were descended by Jill*. Only familiarity with the language will eliminate such malformations as **Fueron esperados por sus padres* 'They were expected by their parents', **Fue permitido hacerlo* (but *Le fue permitido hacerlo* is correct) 'He was allowed to do it', both of them sentences which should be expressed in active form or, in the second example, by impersonal *se*: *Se le permitió hacerlo*.

The constraints on the Spanish passive often appear to be quite arbitrary: *Fue abandonada por su marido* 'She was abandoned by her husband' is correct, but 'She was beaten by her husband' can only be *Su marido le pegaba* (see 12.6.4 for this use of *le*) although *Fue golpeada por su marido* is possible. Likewise, one can say *La casa fue destruida por una bomba* 'The house was destroyed by a

bomb', but not **La ventana fue rota por una piedra* 'The window was broken by a stone', which, curiously, is difficult to translate into Spanish: *Esta ventana la han roto de una pedrada*.

Sometimes the passive is wrong with a personal pronoun, but acceptable with other types of agent: *Él era admirado por todos* 'He was admired by everybody', but not ?*Él era admirado por mí* 'He was admired by me' (*Yo lo/le admiraba*).

In the following sentences passive with *ser* is not used (at least in normal styles), for no very obvious reason:

<i>Me arañó un gato</i>	A cat scratched me
<i>Me dio un periódico</i>	He/she/you gave me a newspaper
<i>La peina un peluquero muy conocido</i>	A very famous hairdresser does her hair
<i>A la niña la lavó la madre</i>	The mother washed the little girl
<i>Me irritó el humo</i>	The smoke irritated me
<i>La despertaron temprano</i>	She was woken up early

It would be beyond the scope of this grammar to establish a comprehensive list of verbs that do not admit passivization with *ser*. As a general rule it seems that verbs commonly used in everyday conversation are less likely to appear in the passive form than verbs usually associated with formal language.

28.2.3 Avoiding the passive

English speakers may be tempted to over-use the passive. It can be avoided by the following stratagems:

(a) Make the sentence active – the simplest solution, although stylistically tedious if overdone:

<i>Los críticos le alabaron</i> (= <i>Fue alabado por los críticos</i>)	The critics praised him
<i>Suspendieron la sesión</i> (= <i>La sesión fue suspendida</i>)	The session was suspended

(b) Use passive *se* (discussed at 28.4).

The following typical piece of Anglicized journalese *Su bufete privado es utilizado con frecuencia para asuntos propios del Gobierno* (*El País*, Spain) 'His private office is often used for Government business' could be better expressed by . . . *su bufete privado se utiliza con frecuencia para asuntos propios del Gobierno*.

This device can only be used if the agent of the action is not included in the sentence: *El fenómeno fue observado por un astrónomo japonés* 'The phenomenon was observed by a Japanese astronomer' cannot be recast using *se*.

(c) Since one function of the passive is to focus attention on the object of a verb – compare 'He preferred Jane' and 'Jane was preferred by him' – the effect of an English passive can often be produced by putting the object in focus position – i.e. before the verb. A redundant object pronoun then usually becomes necessary: *Las puertas las cierran los porteros a las diez* 'The doors are shut by the doormen at ten o'clock'.

This construction is discussed further at 11.16.1.

28.2.4 Passive meaning of the infinitive

The distinction between an active and passive verb is sometimes blurred in infinitive constructions. The following forms sound unfamiliar to English-speakers:

un partido heterogéneo y sin estructurar

El edificio está a medio construir
Eso ya era de prever

A heterogeneous and unstructured
political party (lit. 'without structuring')
The building is half built
That could be foreseen

28.2.5 Comparison between *fue convencido* and *estaba convencido*

This subject is also raised at 19.1.

The passive with *ser* denotes an action; the participle with *estar* usually describes a state arising from an action – i.e. it is not dynamic. Compare *La puerta fue abierta* 'The door was opened' and *La puerta estaba abierta* 'The door was open'. The possibility of making this contrast is normally confined to verbs with a dynamic meaning, i.e. ones that describe actions, not states. The participle of a non-dynamic verb will probably only denote a state and therefore may only admit *estar*, cf. *Estoy acostumbrado* 'I'm used to', *Estás deprimido* 'You're depressed' (*ser* impossible).

In some cases a special participle is used with *estar*: cf. *Estaba despierto porque había sido despertado por una voz de hombre* 'He was awake because he had been woken by a man's voice'. See 19.2.1 for further discussion.

Examples (the translations are designed to emphasize the difference):

La ciudad fue destruida

La ciudad estaba destruida

Fui detenido

Yo estaba detenido

La reunión fue aplazada por decisión del presidente (action)

Cuando llegué me encontré con que la reunión estaba aplazada (state)

Vino aquí . . . convencido de que iba a ser el mandamás. Y se encontró con que todo estaba hecho y muy bien hecho (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue)

. . . los hechos históricos no están gobernados por leyes (O. Paz, Mexico²)

La operación estaba ordenada por el Rey (witness, Spain, expressed as a state)

The city was destroyed

The city was in ruins

I was arrested

I was under arrest

The meeting was postponed by a decision of the president

When I arrived I found the meeting was postponed

He came here convinced he was going to run the show. And he found everything was done and done properly

. . . historical facts are not governed by laws

The operation was ordered by the King

28.2.6 Alternatives to *ser* to express passive meaning

Several other verbs may replace *ser* in the passive. They usually add nuances which can barely be translated into normal English.

(a) *Quedar/quedarse*

Quedar/quedarse emphasizes a condition that has arisen from some event, rather like the popular English 'ended up':

Quedó herido

La Escuela de Periodismo informa que el plazo de inscripción quedará abierto en el mes de octubre (advertisement in El País, Spain)

He was injured (as a result)

The School of Journalism announces that the registration period will commence (lit. 'be opened') in October

² Since literary Latin-American Spanish regularly uses the passive with *ser* to express habitual actions, this sentence might well have been expressed as *son gobernados*. *Están gobernados* would be much more normal in European Spanish.

Queda dicho al principio de este párrafo que . . . (Royal Academy, *Esbozo*)

It was stated at the beginning of this paragraph that . . .

The use of *quedar/quedarse* with adjectives and participles is further discussed at 26.6.4 and 27.3.6.

(b) Resultar

Resultar also emphasizes, and more explicitly than *quedar*, the idea of a condition arising from an event:

Una veintena de personas resultaron heridas

About twenty people were injured (as a result)

(c) Verse

Verse is often used with a participle in literary styles:

Mis ingresos eran reducidos, ya que se veían afectados por la piratería informática (letter in *El País*)

My earnings were low as they were affected by software piracy

. . . más de 450.000 personas se han visto afectadas por la contaminación del agua potable (*El País*)

More than 450,000 people have been affected by pollution of the drinking water

(d) Venir

Use of *venir* suggests that a condition has arisen from some previous event. Again, it is confined to literary styles and it is particularly commonly used when quoting some previous statement:

. . . como viene dicho en el párrafo anterior . . .

. . . as was stated in the previous paragraph . . .

En el caso de producirse omisiones y errores en la guía, la Compañía Telefónica vendrá obligada a corregirlos en la siguiente edición (Spanish phone book)

If omissions or error should appear in the directory, the Telephone Company shall be obliged to correct them in the next edition

28.3 General remarks about passive and impersonal *se*

There are three types of passive and impersonal construction that use *se* (and several more personal ones as well, discussed in Chapter 26):

(a) *Se pasivo* or 'passive *se*' (28.4). This is found only with transitive verbs in the third person. The verb and the logical object agree, e.g. *Se discutieron varios problemas* 'Several problems were discussed', *Se vacunaron las vacas* 'The cows were vaccinated', *Se vendieron tres toneladas* 'Three tons were sold', *La amigdalitis se cura con antibióticos* 'Tonsillitis is cured with antibiotics'.

(b) The 'mixed' construction *se* + transitive verb + *a* (28.5). This construction can be considered impersonal or passive according to one's point of view: it is in fact impersonal in form and passive in meaning. The verb is always in singular: *Se detuvo a tres narcotraficantes* 'Three drug-dealers were arrested', *Se llama a los perros con un silbido* 'Dogs are called by whistling'.

(c) *Se impersonal* or 'Impersonal *se*' (28.6). This is most easily identified when it occurs with intransitive verbs, as in *Se vive mejor aquí* 'One lives better here'.

In the view of many grammarians, 'subjectless' sentences involving transitive verbs, e.g. *Se come bien aquí* 'One eats well here', *Se publica menos ahora* 'There is less publishing now'/'Less is published now', are also examples of

impersonal *se*. The difference between this impersonal use of *se* with transitive verbs and Passive *se* is discussed at 28.6.

28.4 Passive *se*

28.4.1 Basic rules

Passive *se* can only be used with transitive verbs and in the third person, normally only with inanimate nouns and pronouns so as to avoid clashes of meaning with other uses of *se* (see 28.5 for discussion). It is usually equivalent in meaning to passive with *ser*, but it is common in ordinary speech, more 'impersonal' than the passive with *ser* (see 28.2.1 for discussion) and it cannot be used when the agent of the action is mentioned; see note (ii):

<i>Los cangrejos se cuecen en vino blanco</i> ... nunca se oyeron y leyeron en el Perú tantas definiciones de la libertad de información (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru) No se han traído a la Tierra suelo y muestras de minerales del planeta Marte Se reparan relojes Se veían los árboles desde la ventana Esto podría deberse a...	(The) crabs are cooked in white wine ... never were there heard and read in Peru so many definitions of freedom of information Soil and mineral samples from the planet Mars have not been brought to Earth Watches mended The trees were visible from the window This could be due to ... (lit. 'owe itself to')
<i>Se acababan de promulgar varias leyes que se sepa Eso no se hace Se dice que va a dimitir³</i>	Several laws had just been published as far as is known That sort of thing is not done They say/It's said that she's going to resign

Notes

(i) For a comparison of this construction with the true passive – *El problema se solucionó/El problema fue solucionado* – see 28.2.1(d).

(ii) Passive *se* may not be followed by *por* and the real agent of the verb: **La decisión se tomó por el presidente* is bad Spanish for *La decisión fue tomada por el presidente* 'The decision was taken by the President'. This rule is constantly broken in speech and occasionally in writing, but this is considered incorrect: **El terrorismo no debe atacarse aisladamente por las naciones que lo padecen* (the Spanish Prime Minister Felipe González, in *El País*) 'Terrorism must not be combated individually by those nations that suffer from it'. This blunder could have been avoided either by use of passive with *ser*, or by a simple active construction.

(iii) Passive *se* may be used to form a passive imperative, useful for footnotes, written instructions and so on: *No se crea que . . .* 'Let it not be believed that . . .', *Téngase presente que . . .* 'Let it be borne in mind that . . .', *Desarróllese en castellano el siguiente tema* 'Develop the following topic in Spanish'; see 17.8.

(iv) It must be remembered that as far as form is concerned, there is no difference between this passive *se* construction and reflexive or reciprocal *se*. In other words, only common sense tells us that the first example is not to be translated 'The crabs cook themselves in white wine' or 'The crabs cook one another . . .'

³ The older form *dícese que* is probably the origin of a colloquial form, very widespread in Latin America in various guises, e.g. *isque*, *dizque*. It often implies scepticism, cf. Spain *según dicen*: *A los seis años de andar dizque gobernando se puso enfermo* (A. Mastretta, Mexico) 'After six year of governing (so they say) he fell ill'.

28.4.2 Agreement of the verb with passive se

In theory, any verb used with *se* must agree with the logical subject. This is true for all constructions with *se*, whether reflexive, reciprocal or passive. In other words, there is no formal distinction between passive *se* and other kinds of *se*:

Las tuercas se quitan con llave, no con martillo
Se mezclan en el turmix los tomates sin pepitas y sin piel
Se enviaron los hombres y las armas necesarios para concluirlo (i.e. la lucha: Fidel Castro, speech, Cuba)

Bolts are removed with a spanner, not with a hammer
 The tomatoes, with skins and pips removed, are mixed in the liquidizer
 The men and weapons necessary to finish it [the fight] were sent

When passive *se* is used, the rules of agreement are always respected when a plural noun precedes the verb: *Los libros se vendían a mil pesetas* 'The books were sold at 1000 ptas'.

When the verb precedes a plural noun, popular language sometimes breaks the rules of agreement: *?Se compra objetos usados* 'Used articles bought'. This should not be imitated and it may sound quite illiterate in spite of the fact that some grammarians⁴ accept this construction on the grounds that it is really an impersonal construction. Foreigners should make the verb agree.

The following forms may be unacceptable to many speakers:

?Y nunca más se ha tenido noticias de su paradero (ABC; for se han tenido . . .)
?Se necesita agallas para hacer eso (Spanish informant overheard: se necesitan agallas)
?Se les dio varios premios (for se les dieron . . .)
?Se vende máquinas de coser usadas (street sign in Mexico D.F.)

No further news has been received of his whereabouts
 You need courage to do that
 Several prizes were given to them
 Used sewing machines for sale

Note

When passive *se* is followed by *cuánto*, *qué*, *cuál*, the verb is singular: *Se calculó cuántos kilos había* 'It was calculated how many kilos there were', *Se averiguó qué existencias quedaban* 'A check was made of what stocks remained'.

28.4.3 Agreement of passive se with modal verbs

Agreement with plural nouns is required with modal verbs when they precede the infinitive of a transitive verb. In this case *se* can be suffixed to the infinitive or precede the modal verb:

Se tienen que resolver varios problemas/ Tienen que resolverse varios problemas . . . cosas que no se quieren hacer/cosas que no quieren hacerse
En Londres por la calle se pueden observar los tipos de personas más extrañas (Cosmopolitan; = pueden observarse)
Se deben limpiar bien las verduras antes de cocerlas (= deben limpiarse)

Several problems must be solved
 . . . things one doesn't want to do
 In London one can observe the strangest sorts of people in the streets
 Greens should be washed well before boiling

⁴ J.A. de Molina (1974), 23-25.

See 11.14.4 for further discussion of the position of pronouns with the infinitive.

Notes

(i) Singular agreement with modal auxiliary verbs is considered incorrect but it is commonly seen and heard, cf. *?Se puede imprimir textos con más rapidez con un procesador de textos (Ordenador Personal, Spain, for se pueden)* 'Texts can be printed more rapidly with a word-processor'.

(ii) There is, however, a contrary tendency to give non-modal verbs preceding a transitive verb plural agreement with passive *se*, although many grammarians deplore this tendency, cf. *Se necesitan resolver muchos problemas para conseguirlo* 'Many problems have to be resolved in order to achieve it', *Cuando se tratan de estudiar los hallazgos de tiempos pasados . . . (ABC, Spain)* 'When an attempt is made to study the discoveries of the past . . . '.

28.5 Se + transitive verb + personal a

This special type of impersonal or passive construction has evolved to remove some of the ambiguities surrounding the overworked pronoun *se*.

Passive *se* as described at 28.4 is usually unambiguous if there is no noun in the sentence that could be understood to be the subject, as is usually the case when the subject is inanimate: *Los platos se lavan* 'The plates are washed' is unlikely to mean 'The plates wash themselves', which can always be said *Los platos se lavan a sí mismos/Los platos se lavan solos*.

However the burden of ambiguity may be intolerable with animate or personified nouns, particularly those referring to humans, since *Se mataron dos ingleses* may mean 'Two Englishmen killed themselves' as well as 'killed one another'. The language has developed a device for removing the ambiguity by marking the object by the preposition *a*. The verb is always singular:

Se mató a dos ingleses
Se criticó duramente al cineasta
Se incitaba a las muchachas a trabajar más
que los muchachos
Se persiguió y encarceló a millares de
creyentes (El País)

Two Englishmen were killed
 The film-maker was severely criticized
 The girls were encouraged to work
 harder than the boys
 Thousands of believers were persecuted
 and jailed

Notes

(i) When a pronoun replaces the logical object, many speakers, including Latin-Americans, prefer *le/les* to *lo/la/los/las* in sentences like . . . *hasta que se les pueda evacuar* (Miguel González, *El País*) ' . . . until they can be evacuated', *Al escritor se le halaga o se le desprecia* (A. Monterroso, *El País*) 'The writer is praised or despised'. See 12.6.3 for discussion.

(ii) Sometimes one finds sentences like *Se ha comparado a los ordenadores con el cerebro humano* 'Computers have been compared with the human brain', *Se debe amar más a la verdad que a la fama* 'One must love truth more than fame', in spite of the fact that the logical object is inanimate. This is done to avoid all possibility of a reflexive meaning; see 22.10c for further comments.

(iii) If the logical object is not specific, i.e. does not require personal *a*, ordinary passive *se* is used (see 22.2 for discussion of the omission of personal *a* when the direct object is not specific or particularized): *Se ven muchos turistas en el verano* 'You see a lot of tourists in summer/A lot of tourists are seen in summer'.

(iv) A sentence like *Se mató a dos ingleses* exemplifies the peculiarities of *se*. *Se* is traditionally thought of as an 'object' pronoun, but in the above example *a dos ingleses* is clearly the 'direct object' of *matar*, in which case *se* is functioning as a subject.

This theoretical problem has troubled many linguists, but it need not concern the practical user of the language.

(v) The verb must be singular in this construction. **Se les notaban cansados* is not heard in Spain although it is sometimes heard in (but not written) Latin America.

28.6 Impersonal se

28.6.1 General

There are two types of construction that can be analysed under the heading of 'Impersonal *se*'.

The first occurs with intransitive verbs: *Se está mejor aquí* 'One's better off here' (French *On est mieux ici*), *Se entra por ahí* 'One goes in that way/through there' (French *On entre par là*). Such sentences can obviously not be translated as passive sentences, and they have no equivalent in French, which restricts the use of *se* to transitive verbs, e.g. *Cela ne se dit pas* = *No se dice eso* 'That isn't said'.⁵

The second occurs with transitive verbs which are always singular and third-person. The distinction between this use of *se* and Passive *se* is as follows:

If we are talking about a specific book, the sentence *En España se lee poco* must be translated 'It isn't read much in Spain' or 'People don't read it much in Spain'; this is a clear instance of Passive *se* as discussed at 28.4. But if the sentence has no identifiable subject, it must be translated 'In Spain people don't read much'; the construction has no equivalent in French, which must use *on*: . . . *on ne lit pas beaucoup*. This construction with *se* can be analysed either as a kind of impersonal passive, or as a use of *se* as an impersonal subject pronoun similar to the French *on*; linguists disagree in their explanations.

That native speakers sometimes confuse the two constructions is shown by the popular tendency to treat passive *se* as impersonal in badly-formed sentences like ?*Se vende manzanas* for *Se venden manzanas* 'Apples sold/for sale'; see 28.4.2 for discussion. Occasionally the difference between the two constructions may be visible in the word order, as in *La verdad no puede siempre decirse* 'The truth can't always be told' (passive) and *No se puede decir siempre la verdad* 'One can't always tell the truth' (impersonal).

English-speaking learners should sense the difference instinctively since translation by the English passive is impossible in the case of impersonal sentences like *En Francia se bebe mucho* 'People drink a lot in France', and a passive translation comes easily when there is a discoverable subject, as when someone says the same sentence during a conversation about red wine, in which case it will probably mean 'A lot (of it) is drunk in France' or 'People drink it a lot in France'.

28.6.2 Impersonal se: examples

The following examples show the use of impersonal *se* with intransitive verbs:

⁵ Italian impersonal *si* is constructed differently from its Spanish equivalent, compare *si è contenti* and *se está contento* 'one's content'/'people are content' (adjective always singular in Spanish).

En su círculo, o se es rico o no se entra

*A las tres de la madrugada pareció
llegarse a un acuerdo tácito para descansar
(J. Cortázar, Argentina)
Por la mañana se avanzó muy poco*

*Se cruza si el semáforo está en verde y se
espera si está en rojo (El País, Spain)
. . . si sobra ya se pensará en subvenciones
(G. Torrente Ballester, Spain)
No escuchaba cuando se le hablaba (El País,
Spain)
No se puede entrar
No se debe ir con prisas*

In her circle one's either rich or one
doesn't get in
At three in the morning it appeared that
a tacit agreement was reached to get
some rest
Very little progress was made in the
morning
One crosses if the lights are green and
one waits if they are red
. . .if there's any (money) left, subsidies
could be considered then
He didn't listen when somebody talked
to him
Entrance forbidden
One musn't rush

The following examples illustrate the use of impersonal *se* with transitive verbs. In every case it is assumed that there is no recoverable subject in the sentence – otherwise the construction must be analysed as passive *se* as discussed at 28.4:

*No puedo vivir en un mundo donde no
se ame (i.e. donde no haya amor)
En este país se critica y se insulta mucho
. . .un régimen en el que se mata y se
tortura
En esas reuniones se habla mucho, pero . . .*

I can't live in a world where people
don't love
In this country people criticize and
insult a lot
. . .a régime in which killing and
torturing take place
A lot of talking goes on in those
meetings, but . . .

Notes

- (i) Impersonal *se* cannot be used with a verb that already has *se* attached to it for some other reason; see 26.9.
- (ii) As with most sentences involving *se*, common sense and context often clarify the meaning. Thus *Se iba al teatro* may mean 'He was going off to the theatre' or 'People used to go to the theatre'.
- (iii) Impersonal *se* may even appear in combination with passive with *ser*, although this is rare: *No se debe hablar más que con personas a las que se ha sido ya presentado* 'One must only talk to people one has been introduced to' (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain).
- (iv) For agreement of *se* with modal verbs preceding the infinitive of a transitive verb see 28.4.3.

28.7 Other impersonal constructions

28.7.1 *Uno/una* as a pronoun

This is similar to the English 'one' in that it is often an oblique or modest way of saying 'I' or 'we'. A woman uses *una* if the pronoun refers to herself, but *uno* if no self-reference is intended. Its object forms are *lo/lalle*. For many Latin-Americans *uno* is the only form used, even by women, but the example from Vargas Llosa suggests that this may not be universal. This construction is often interchangeable with passive or impersonal *se*:

*como los pájaros que comen las migas
que uno les tira (J. Cortázar, Argentina
dialogue, woman speaking, or que se les
tiran)*

like birds eating the crumbs one throws
to them

Bueno, si no le dicen a una como hay que hacerlo . . . (woman speaking, or si no se le dice a una)

Well, if they don't tell one how to do it . . .

Uno no hace mal a la gente que le es indiferente (E. Sábato, Argentina, dialogue, woman speaking; or no se hace mal a . . .)

One doesn't do harm to people one is indifferent to

En ese tiempo una no hablaba de eso con las amigas (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue, woman speaking) or no se hablaba de eso)

In those days one didn't talk about those things with one's women friends

Notes

(i) *Uno* must be used to make an impersonal expression from a verb which already has *se* (since two *ses* cannot occur with the same verb): *En este pueblo se aburre uno mucho* 'In this village one gets bored a lot', *Se empieza fumando unos cigarrillos y poco a poco se convierte uno en un fumador empedernido* 'One starts by smoking a few cigarettes and gradually one becomes a heavy smoker'. See 26.9 for discussion.

(ii) Colloquially *uno/una* may mean 'someone'. See 9.3 note (iv).

28.7.2 Impersonal tú

The second-person singular can be used impersonally, much the same as in English. *Usted* is used instead of *tú* in formal contexts but most people use *uno* or *se* when they are on formal terms with the hearer:

Yo nunca voy allí porque te cobran más que en otra parte (le cobran a uno más)
Es increíble, si lo piensas (si uno lo piensa)

I never go there because they charge you more than elsewhere
It's incredible if you think of it

In theory the second-person singular cannot coexist in the same sentence with impersonal *se*, but it appears in informal speech, just as pronouns are mixed in familiar English: *Es que no se tiene conciencia de que pasa el tiempo cuando eres joven* (Queen Sofía, interview in *El País*, Spain) 'It's that **one** isn't conscious of time passing when **you're** young'.

28.7.3 Impersonal third-person plural

As in English, the third-person plural is often used impersonally when the speaker does not include him/herself or the hearer in the reference:

Dicen que el ejercicio es bueno para el corazón

They say exercise is good for the heart

Parece que hablan más despacio en Estados Unidos que en Inglaterra

It seems that they speak more slowly in the USA than in England

29

Ser and estar

29.1 General

Ser and *estar* both translate the English 'to be', but the difference between the two Spanish words is fundamental and sometimes elusive.

Basically *ser* denotes nature or identity while *estar* denotes condition, state or place: *Soy español, pero estoy en Londres* 'I'm Spanish, but I'm in London', *Es callado* 'He's the quiet type', *Está callado* 'He's silent'/'He's keeping silent', *Puede que sea así* 'Perhaps he/she/it is like that', *Puede que esté así* 'Perhaps that's the condition/situation he/she/it's in'.

It is misleading to imagine that *estar* always refers to temporary states while *ser* indicates permanence. This is often true but it is contradicted by sentences like *Está muerto* 'He's dead' or by the fact that one can say either *Soy calvo* or *Estoy calvo* 'I'm bald'. Nor is a characteristic expressed by *ser* necessarily permanent. A brunette can change the colour of her hair and then say *Antes era morena pero ahora soy rubia* 'I was a brunette before, but now I've become a blonde', the point being that both colours are nevertheless considered to be essential attributes of the woman, not 'states'.

Ser is used with a few adjectives that indicate states which are often transitory, e.g. *feliz* 'happy', *desgraciado* 'unhappy', *pobre* 'poor', *rico* 'rich', *consciente* 'conscious'; but these are probably best treated as exceptions, cf. *Está deprimido* 'He's depressed', *Está contento* 'He's happy/content', *Está animado* 'He's full of life' (*estar* obligatory).

Some adjectives, e.g. *gordo* 'fat', *divorciado* 'divorced', may be used with either *ser* or *estar* with hardly any significant change of meaning. *Estar* before a noun phrase can usually only denote situation: Compare *¿Es el jefe?* 'Is he the boss?' with *¿Está el jefe?* 'Is the boss in?'.

Learners constantly forget that *ser* must be used for the location of events as opposed to people or things: *¿Dónde es la fiesta?* 'Where's the party?', but *¿Dónde está el libro?* 'Where's the book?'.

Ser is used to form the passive: *fue criticado*; see Chapter 28. *Estar* is used to form the continuous aspect of verbs: *está hablando* 'he's talking'; see Chapter 15.

29.2 Uses of *ser*

29.2.1 In equational sentences of the sort **A = B**

Ser is used to link elements in statements of the type 'A = B', where A and B are nouns or pronouns:

París es la capital de Francia
Es médico/abogado/bibliotecario
Es un estafador
Miguel es el jefe
Es la una/Son las doce
Ha sido un año/verano frío

Paris is the French capital
 He's a doctor/lawyer/librarian
 He's a swindler
 Miguel's the boss
 It's one o'clock/twelve o'clock
 It's been a cold year/summer

Note

Exceptions to this rule in European colloquial speech are *Está un día hermoso* 'It's a beautiful day' and *estar pez*, e.g. *Estoy pez en historia* 'I'm a complete dunce in History'.

29.2.2 Ser with adjectives

Ser is used with adjectives or adjectival phrases referring to identity or nature, i.e. physical, moral and mental characteristics:

¿Quién eres?/¿Cómo eres?
Soy, alto, moreno y delgado
Las mariposas son diferentes de las polillas
El marxismo es materialista
El cobre es ideal para los cables
Esa chaqueta es bien bonita

Who are you?/What are you like?
 I'm tall, dark and slim
 Butterflies are different from moths
 Marxism is materialist
 Copper is ideal for cables
 That jacket is very nice

Notes

(i) 'It is hot'/'it is cold' applied to weather are translated by *hace calor/frío*, but 'It's a beautiful day' *Hace/Está/Es un día estupendo*. For *estar caliente/frío* see 29.3.1.

(ii) For 'cleft' sentences of the type *Ella es la que lo dijo* 'She's the one who said it' see 36.2.2. For *calvo, gordo, delgado*, marital status and behaviour, see 29.4.1b. For time expressions see Chapter 32.

29.2.3 Ser with certain adjectives apparently denoting states

Ser is normally used with *pobre/feliz/desgraciado/inocente/culpable/consciente/fiel* 'poor/happy/unhappy/innocent/guilty/aware/faithful' despite the fact that they may be thought of as conditions:

Ella me dijo soy pobre, pero honrada, Tan sólo bailo para ganarme el pan (Argentine tango)
El acusado dijo que era inocente
Hay muchos que no se sienten culpables aunque lo sean
Soy consciente de mis limitaciones
La gente así no suele ser feliz en la vida, señora (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)
Pocas veces fue tan feliz como en las horas que precedieron a la entrevista con Bordenave (E. Sabato, Argentina)
—Soy tan desgraciada —me dijo (G. Cabrera Infante, Cuba)

She told me I'm poor but honest, I only dance to earn my living

The accused said he was innocent
 There are many people who don't feel guilty even though they are
 I'm conscious of my limitations
 People like that are not usually happy in life, Señora
 He was seldom so happy as during the hours before his interview with Bordenave
 'I'm so unhappy', she told me

Notes

(i) *Estar rico/pobre/feliz* is sometimes heard in Spain when describing a transitory state, although many Spaniards (but not Latin-Americans) reject *estar* with these adjectives: *Estoy más pobre que una rata* 'I'm as poor as a church mouse' (lit. 'poorer than a rat'), *Ahora estoy feliz y contento* 'Now I'm happy and satisfied' (*contento* also means 'happy'), *Estaban tan felices que me dieron envidia* (A. Mastretta, Mexico) 'They were so happy that they filled me with envy'.

Estar rico generally means 'to be tasty' in Spain, see 29.4.4, but not necessarily in Latin America: *Andrés acompañó al padre José que estaba riquísimo y lo oyó jurar*

por la Virgen de Covadonga que no tenía un centavo (A. Mastretta, Mexico) 'Andrés accompanied Father José, who was extremely rich and he heard him swear by the Virgin of Covadonga that he didn't have a cent'.

(ii) Peninsular usage normally differentiates *ser consciente* 'to be aware' and *estar consciente* 'to be conscious' (i.e. not asleep or knocked out). Latin-American language generally retains the older usage: *Estamos conscientes de que el debate y la discusión en la libertad son demandas de los jóvenes del país* (Unomásuno, Mexico) 'We're aware that debate and argument in (an atmosphere of) freedom are demands of the young people of the country'.

29.2.4 *Ser de*

Ser can be followed by *de* + noun or by *de* + *un* + adjective to denote identity, nature, origin or the material something is made of:

—¿De dónde eres? —De Londres	'Where do you come from?' 'London'
La situación era de risa	The situation was extremely funny
Es de día/noche	It's day/night
—¿De qué es la mesa? —Es de madera	'What's the table made of?' 'Wood'
Soy de carne y hueso como tú	I'm made of flesh and blood like you
Esa chica es de miedo	That girl is tremendous
Oye, que es de verdad	Listen, it's true
Es de un pesado	He/she's such a bore

29.2.5 *Ser* in impersonal statements

Es verdad/mentira/una tontería/una penal/una lata	It's true/a lie/nonsense/a pity/a bore
Es evidente/obvio/terrible	It's evident/obvious/terrible
Es de suponer que me llamará	One assumes she'll ring me
Es de desear que no sea así	It's to be wished that it won't be like that

Note

Está claro 'it's clear/obvious' is the usual European phrase, but *es claro* is common in Latin America.

29.2.6 *Ser* to denote possession

Todo esto es mío, el día de mañana será tuyo	All this is mine, tomorrow it'll be yours
El piso es de mi yerno	The flat/apartment belongs to my son-in-law

29.2.7 *Ser* to denote impressions

Me es/resulta simpática	I find her likeable
Esto me es/resulta molesto	This is uncomfortable for me
Todo le era distinto (A. Carpentier, Cuba)	Everything seemed different to her

29.2.8 *Ser* of events

If 'to be' means 'to be held' or 'to happen' it must be translated by *ser*:

La fiesta es/se celebra en su casa	The party is at his place
Hay un incendio en el edificio pero no sé en qué piso es	There's a fire in the building but I don't know which floor it's on
¿Dónde es la manifestación?	Where is the demonstration?
El entierro sería a las cinco (G. García Márquez, Colombia)	The funeral was to be at five

Use of *estar* may imply a physical object. Compare: *¿Dónde es la conferencia?* 'Where's the lecture (being held)?', *¿Dónde está la conferencia?* 'Where's the lecture?' (i.e. the lecture notes or typescript).

29.3 Uses of *estar*

29.3.1 *Estar* to describe state as opposed to identity or nature

Estar with adjectives that indicate mood, physical condition or non-characteristic features in general:

<i>Está más bien triste</i>	He's rather sad
<i>Estuvo enfermo una temporada</i>	He was ill/(US) 'sick' for a time
<i>Hoy no estoy muy católico</i>	I don't feel very well today
<i>Estoy segura de lo que te digo</i>	I'm certain of what I'm telling you
<i>El agua que se añade tiene que estar caliente</i>	The water to be added has to be hot
<i>El televisor está estropeado</i>	The television doesn't work
<i>Está parado desde febrero</i>	He's been out of work since February

Note

The pervasive use of the passive with *ser* in written Latin-American Spanish, especially to denote habitual or continuous actions, may produce sentences that require *estar* in Spain. This seems to be particularly frequent in Mexico: *Una de las mesas era ocupada por el doctor Bernstein* (C. Fuentes, Mexico, Spain *estaba ocupada*) 'One of the tables was occupied by Doctor Bernstein'.

29.3.2 *Estar de*

Estar de + adjective or noun to indicate mood, temporary employment or situation:

<i>Está de buen/mal humor</i>	He's in a good/bad mood
<i>Está de camarero en Inglaterra</i>	He's working as a waiter in England
<i>Está de veraneo</i>	He's taking his summer holidays/ vacation
<i>Estamos de charla</i>	We're having a chat

Colloquially: *Estás de un guapo subido* 'You look especially pretty/handsome',
Estaba de un antipático . . . 'He was in such a bad mood . . .'

29.3.3 *Estar con*

Estar followed by *con* + noun:

<i>Está con gripe</i>	He's got the flu
<i>Estaba con una cara malísima</i>	He looked terrible
<i>Estaba con un traje de chaqueta muy bonito</i>	She was wearing a suit

29.3.4 *Estar* + adverb

Estar followed by an adverb or an adjective used as an adverb:

—¿Cómo estás? — <i>Estoy bien/mal</i>	'How are you?' 'I'm well/not at all well'
<i>El nombre está mal. Se llamaba Luis José</i> (Cambio16, Spain)	The name is wrong. His name was Luis José
<i>Estamos fatal</i>	We're feeling rotten

29.3.5 *Estar que*

<i>Está que muerde</i>	He's in an exceedingly bad mood (lit. 'he's ready to bite')
<i>Hoy estás que no hay quien te aguante</i>	You're unbearable today

29.3.6 *Estar* to indicate location

(For *ser* used for the location of events see 29.2.8.)

<i>Segovia está en España</i>	Segovia is in Spain
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El cerezo está en el centro
No está (en casa)
Está encima de todo

The cherry tree is in the middle
 He's not at home
 It's on top of everything

But with nouns that are permanent fixtures or features there is a colloquial tendency to use *ser*: *¿Dónde es la casa de tu amigo?* 'Where's your friend's house?', *Aquí era la plaza de las Carretas* (J.L. Borges, Argentina, dialogue) 'This is where Carretas Square used to be', *Turku es en Finlandia, ¿no?* 'Turku's in Finland, isn't it?'

Estar would also be correct in these three sentences.

29.3.7 *Estar* meaning 'to suit', or to indicate 'fit'

Este traje te está muy bien
El abrigo te está corto
El puesto de ministro le está grande

This dress suits you
 The coat is short for you
 The ministerial job is too big for him

For *estar* with *por* and *para* see 34.14.8.

29.4 Ser or estar?

29.4.1 Ser and estar more or less interchangeable

(a) With words indicating marital status:

Sale con una chica que es/está divorciada
Tiene que mantener a su madre que es/está viuda
Le pregunté si era/estaba casado

He's going out with a girl who's divorced
 He has to keep his widowed mother
 I asked him whether he was married

The tendency is to use *ser* for a stranger, although *estar* is not wrong. One would usually ask *¿Es usted casado?* 'Are you married?', but two friends meeting again would say *¿Estás casado?* or *¿Todavía estás soltero?* 'Are you married?' or 'Are you still single?'

(b) With *calvo*, *gordo* and *delgado*, *estar* is always used when there has been a change of state. Elsewhere the two verbs are practically interchangeable except in generalizations, when *ser* is required:

¡Mujer, pero qué delgada estás!
Siempre ha sido calvo/gordo, pero ahora está más calvo/gordo que nunca
Ayer conocí a la novia de mi primo. Parece simpática pero está/les muy delgada
Las mujeres de esa tribu son muy gordas (generalization)

Good heavens, haven't you got thin!
 He's always been bald/fat but now he's balder/fatter than ever
 Yesterday I met my cousin's girlfriend. She seems nice but she's very thin
 The women of that tribe are very fat

(c) With adjectives describing social manner when 'to be' = 'to behave':

Estuvo/Fue muy cortés conmigo
Siempre está/les cariñosa
Tienes que estar/ser más amable con él

He/She behaved very courteously towards me
 She's always affectionate
 You must be kinder to him

But *Hoy has sido bueno* 'You've behaved well today', because *estar bueno* means 'tasty', 'appetising' and therefore also 'sexually arousing'. Note, however *¡Hoy has estado bueno!* 'You had a good day today!' (ironical, i.e. 'I

don't think . . .'). *Estar* cannot be used for general statements: *Antiguamente los ingleses eran muy corteses* 'Formerly the English were very courteous'.

(d) With adjectives applied to events and with *vida* and *situación*:

La conferencia fue/estuvo muy interesante

La situación es/está caótica

La fiesta fue/estuvo muy animada

La vida es/está cara hoy día

The lecture was very interesting

The situation is chaotic

The party was very lively

Life is expensive nowadays

But *La vida es difícil/maravillosa/amarga* 'Life is difficult, marvellous, bitter' can only be general comments on life. *La vida está difícil* means 'Life is difficult now'.

(e) With adjectives referring to weather applied to *día* and *tiempo*:

El día es/está bueno

Es/está un tiempo soleado, agradable

The weather is nice today

The weather is sunny and pleasant

29.4.2 *Ser and estar with prices*

¿Cuánto/A cuánto/A cómo son las uvas?

Son a cincuenta pesetas el kilo

¿Cuánto (es lo que) le debo?

¿A cuánto/A cómo están las uvas?

¿A cuánto/A cómo están esas acciones?

How much are the grapes?

Fifty pesetas a kilo

How much do I owe you?

How much are the grapes (at this moment)?

What's the price of those shares?

29.4.3 *Estar implying impression or change of condition*

When *estar* denotes impression, sensation or appearance, it often calls for translation by a special verb in English, e.g. 'to look', 'to taste', 'to feel' or 'to get'. Use of *estar* rather than *ser* often shows there has been a change of condition. Compare:

Es muy guapa

Está muy guapa

Este niño es muy alto

Este niño está muy alto

Es muy joven/viejo

Está muy joven/viejo

¡Qué fuerte eres!

¡Qué fuerte estás!

Este sillón es ya viejo

Este sillón está ya viejo

*El pollo es riquísimo**

El pollo está riquísimo

*El café es horrible**

El café está horrible

Tráelo como sea

Tráelo como esté

Eres muy española

Estás muy española

She's very good-looking

She's looking very attractive

This child is very tall

This child has grown very tall

He's very young/old

He's looking very young/old

How strong you are!

How strong you are! (today/these days)

This armchair is old

This armchair is getting old

(The) chicken is very good

The chicken tastes delicious

(The) coffee is horrible

The coffee tastes horrible

Bring it any way you can

Bring it as it is

You're very Spanish

You're looking very Spanish (or behaving like a typical Spanish woman)

The examples marked with an asterisk are ambiguous: *El pollo es riquísimo* is either a general statement about chicken or it could mean 'The chicken (uncooked) is very good quality'. *Estar* could only mean 'to taste'.

29.4.4 Ser and estar involving change of meaning

There are some words whose meaning is radically affected by choice of *ser* or *estar*. The following list is not exhaustive:

<i>ser aburrido</i>	to be boring	<i>estar aburrido</i>	to be bored
<i>ser atento</i>	courteous	<i>estar atento</i>	attentive
<i>ser bueno</i>	good	<i>estar bueno</i>	tasty
<i>ser cansado</i>	tiresome	<i>estar cansado</i>	tired
<i>ser católico</i>	catholic	<i>no estar católico</i>	unwell
<i>ser decidido</i>	resolute	<i>estar decidido</i>	decided
<i>ser consciente</i>	aware	<i>estar consciente</i>	conscious (not asleep or knocked out)
<i>ser despierto</i>	sharp/alert	<i>estar despierto</i>	awake
<i>ser un enfermo</i>	be an invalid	<i>estar enfermo</i>	be ill
<i>ser interesado</i>	self-seeking	<i>estar interesado</i>	interested
<i>ser listo</i>	clever	<i>estar listo</i>	to be ready
<i>ser (un) loco</i>	scatterbrained	<i>estar loco</i>	mad
<i>ser malo</i>	bad	<i>estar malo</i>	ill
<i>ser negro</i>	black	<i>estar negro</i>	very irritated
<i>ser orgulloso</i>	proud (pejorative)	<i>estar orgulloso</i>	proud of something/ somebody
<i>ser rico</i>	rich	<i>estar rico</i>	delicious
<i>ser torpe</i>	slow-witted	<i>estar torpe</i>	clumsy, moving with difficulty
<i>ser verde</i>	green/smitty	<i>estar verde</i>	unripe
<i>ser violento</i>	violent/ embarrassing	<i>estar violento</i>	embarrassed
<i>ser vivo</i> (<i>ser un vivo</i>)	sharp/alert be unscrupulous)	<i>estar vivo</i>	alive

30

Existential sentences

30.1 General

'Existential sentences' are sentences that refer to the existence of things: 'There's bread', 'There is a planet called Pluto', 'God exists'/'There is a God', etc.

In Spanish such sentences usually involve the special verb *haber* (present indicative *hay*), which means 'there is/are'. However, the picture is complicated for foreign students because of the existence of another verb, *estar*, which means 'to be located'/'to be *there*'.

30.2 *Haber* (*hay*)

30.2.1 Basic uses

Haber has two uses: (a) as an auxiliary used to form perfect tenses (discussed at 14.8); (b) as a verb meaning 'there is'/'there are', cf. French *il y a*, German *es gibt*.

In the latter sense the verb occurs only in the third-person singular (see note (ii) for a rare exception in popular speech). It is conjugated exactly as the third-person singular of the auxiliary *haber*, except that its present indicative is *hay*, not *ha*. In this chapter, *haber* in the sense of 'there is/are' is referred to as '*hay*' to avoid confusion with the auxiliary.

Hay can occur in any tense with the meaning 'there is/are/were/will be/have been', etc. However, it does not mean '. . . is/are/were *there*' (= *está/están/estaban ahí/allí*). The relationship between *hay* and *estar* is discussed further at 30.3.

Examples of *hay*:

Hay doscientas personas en el aula

There are two hundred people in the lecture hall

Antes había dos puentes

There used to be two bridges

¿Qué hay?

What's happening?/How're things?

¿Qué hubo?/¿Quiubo? (Colombia and surrounding areas only)

How're things?

Notes

(i) *Hay* is not pluralized: *Había tres chicas* 'There were three girls', never **Habían tres chicas*; *Hubo clases de italiano el año pasado* 'There were Italian classes last year', never **Hubieron clases de italiano* . . .

In Spain the plural construction is stigmatized as uneducated, but it is a very common feature of everyday Castilian as spoken in Catalonia. In Latin America it is universally common in everyday, even educated speech, and it quite frequently

appears in informal writing (e.g. newspapers), but it is not accepted in careful styles.

(ii) It is used only in the third person: *Hay cinco* 'There are five', but *Somos cinco* 'There are five of us', *Ustedes son cinco* 'There are five of you', also *Son cinco* 'There are five of them'.

A first-person plural construction ?*Habemos cinco* 'There are five of us' (NB. not the usual form *hemos*) occurs in rustic speech in Spain for the more usual *Somos cinco* and is rather more prevalent in popular speech in Latin America, although it is rejected by educated speakers.

(iii) *Hay* is not followed by the definite article, except when it means 'to exist', in which case *existir* is more commonly used: *Ha venido el médico* (not **Hay el médico*) 'There's the doctor!' (i.e. he's arrived). But *También hay/existe la posibilidad de . . .* 'The possibility also exists of . . .'. Constructions like ?*Hay el cartero* 'The postman's there!' are typical Catalanisms.

(iv) For *hay que* 'it is necessary to' see 21.4.2.

30.2.2 Direct object pronouns and hay

Hay functions like an impersonal transitive verb. Since transitive verbs in Spanish must normally have a direct object, an object pronoun may be required to indicate the presence of a deleted noun:

No hubo presiones, ni las hay, ni las habrá
(Felipe González in *El País*)
. . . *el cochero quiso asegurarse de que no*
había ningún error. No lo había (G. García
Márquez, Colombia)
Los hay con suerte

There wasn't any pressure, there isn't
any and there won't be
. . .the coach driver sought reassurance
that there was no mistake. There wasn't

Some people are lucky/have all the luck

This pronoun is not always used in informal Latin-American speech, but it is normal in Latin-American writing. See 7.4 for resumptive pronoun with *ser*, *estar*, *parecer*.

30.3 Hay and estar in existential sentences

Estar has many other uses, discussed in detail in Chapter 29.

As far as its relationship with *hay* is concerned, *está* basically means '. . . is there' and *hay* means 'there is/are . . .'. In other words, *hay* states that something exists, *estar* indicates that it is located somewhere.

In certain cases the meanings overlap, as in *No hay nadie* 'There's no one (there)' and *No está nadie* 'No one's there'/'No one's at home'.

30.3.1 Uses of estar and hay with defined nouns

Nouns accompanied by the definite article, by a possessive adjective or by a demonstrative (*ese, este, aquel*) normally require *estar*. *Hay* used with such noun phrases is restricted in its meaning to 'exists', as is explained at 30.2.1 note (iii):

Hay un gerente en la compañía

There's a manager in the company (i.e.
'a manager exists')

Está el gerente

The manager's there/here/in

No hay dinero

There's no money (anywhere)

No está el dinero/El dinero no está

The money isn't here/there

¿Hay tortilla española?

Have you got Spanish omelette/omelet?

¿Está la tortilla española?

Is the Spanish omelette on the list?/Is the
Spanish omelette ready?

Por un lado hay *las grandes fiestas, y por el otro, las distracciones institucionales* (Cambio16, Spain; = *existen*)
 —¿Qué hay en este pueblo? —Hay la iglesia . . .¹ (= *existe*)
 —¿Había alguien?
 Estaban ellos y sus padres (does not mean *existen*)
 Al ascensor sólo tienen acceso los seres humanos, es decir no se pueden subir ni perros ni cosas . . . para eso está el montecargas (E. Arenas, Spain, dialogue)

On the one hand there are the major fiestas, and on the other hand institutionalized amusements
 'What is there in this village?' 'There's the church . . .'
 'Was there anyone there?'
 'They and their parents were there'

Only people have access to the lifts/elevators, in other words dogs and things can't be taken up in them . . . the service lift's there for that

Note

In relative clauses, *hay* and *estar* seem to be interchangeable in some sentences, but only *estar* is possible before definite nouns referring to animates (i.e. ones preceded by *el* or *ese/este/aquel*): Reconocí al señor que *estaba* en la puerta (not *hay*) 'I recognised the gentleman who was at the door', Reconocí a un señor que *había/estaba* en la puerta 'I recognised a gentleman who was at the door', El sitio estratégico es la mesa que *hay* al lado de la cristalera que da a la calle (E. Arenas, Spain, dialogue; *está* possible) 'The strategic spot is the table that's next to the window looking out on the street'.

30.3.2 Estar for mobile things

Estar implies that a thing is mobile, *hay* merely that it exists. For this reason, words like 'problem', 'question', 'atmosphere', 'accident' can only appear with *hay* since they do not move around:

Ha habido un accidente
 Ha habido aquí tres presidentes

There's been an accident
 There have been three presidents
 here/We've had three presidents (in this country)

Han estado aquí tres presidentes

Three presidents have been here/have visited here

30.3.3 Hay used before partitive nouns and numbers

Before partitive nouns (quantities, parts of a whole), only *hay* can be used:

Hay leche
 Había gente

There's (some) milk
 There were (some) people

Since *hay* can be used only in the third person (see 30.2.1, note ii), *ser* must be used for other persons. This construction occurs with numbers:

Había cuarenta personas en la fiesta
 Éramos cuarenta en la fiesta
 Vais (Lat. Am. *van*) a ser cuarenta en la fiesta

There were forty people at the party
 There were forty of us at the party
 There will be forty of you at the party

¹ *Haber* is possible here with the definite article because it answers the question 'What things exist?' not 'Where is . . .?'. However, use of *haber* in this sentence may not be acceptable to Latin Americans.

31

Adverbs

31.1 General

Spanish adverbials (i.e. adverbs and adverb phrases) can be divided into two large classes: invariable words and phrases, and adverbs formed from adjectives by adding the suffix *-mente*. Examples of the first type are *mal* 'badly', *ayer* 'yesterday', *adrede* (familiar *aposta*) 'on purpose', *en serio* 'seriously' (i.e. not jokingly). Examples of the latter are *tranquilamente* 'tranquilly', *violentamente* 'violently', *naturalmente* 'naturally'. Although the suffix *-mente* is very productive there are severe and apparently arbitrary constraints on its use.

A few adjectives also function as adverbs: *Hablaban fuerte* 'They were talking loudly'; see 31.3.3.

More common in Spanish than in English, especially in writing, is the use of an adjective where English uses an adverb: *El rey los recibió agradecido* 'The King received them gratefully', *Vivían felices* 'They lived happily'; see 31.3.4.

31.2 Adverbs in *-mente*

31.2.1 Formation

If the adjective has a separate feminine form, *-mente* is added to it. Otherwise it is added to the invariable singular form:

Masc. singular	Fem. singular	Adverbial form	
<i>absoluto</i>	<i>absoluta</i>	<i>absolutamente</i>	absolutely
<i>cansado</i>	<i>cansada</i>	<i>cansadamente</i>	in a tired way
<i>evidente</i>	<i>evidente</i>	<i>evidentemente</i>	evidently
<i>leal</i>	<i>leal</i>	<i>lealmente</i>	loyally
<i>tenaz</i>	<i>tenaz</i>	<i>tenazmente</i>	tenaciously

31.2.2 Accent rules for adverbs in *-mente*

The original stress should be preserved in pronunciation. As a result, adjectives that are irregularly stressed form adverbs in *-mente* that have two stress accents, one on the vowel that carries the written accent, another on the penultimate syllable: *crítico/criticamente* 'critical'/'critically', *electrónico/electrónicamente* 'electronic'/'electronically', *hábil/hábilmente* 'skilful'/'skilfully', *sarcástico/sarcásticamente* 'sarcastically'. Pronunciation of such words with a single penultimate stress should be avoided.

31.2.3 Consecutive adverbs in *-mente*

If more than one adverb in *-mente* is joined by a conjunction (e.g. *y, ni, pero*, etc.), *-mente* is dropped from all but the last:

*Se lo dije sincera y llanamente
Esto presenta un problema político mayor, y
ni intelectual, ni política, ni económicamente
se puede mantener tal postura (El País)*

I told him sincerely and plainly
This presents a major political problem,
and neither intellectually, nor politically
nor economically can such a position be
sustained

*Tuvo la desvergüenza de decirme que era
poco serio, que ni social ni literariamente era
interesante (S. Pitol, Mexico, dialogue)*

She had the nerve to tell me that it
wasn't serious, that it was neither
socially nor artistically (lit. 'literarily')
interesting

This is an important rule of written Spanish, though rarely applied in spontaneous speech. But it is not normal when no conjunction is present: *y así, separados por el muro de vidrio, habíamos vivido ansiosamente, melancólicamente* (E. Sábato, Argentina), 'and thus, separated by the wall of glass, we had lived anxiously, melancholically'.

31.2.4 Limits on the use of the suffix *-mente*

-mente cannot be added to all adjectives, although there is no accounting for experiments, as when Julio Cortázar coins *pelirrojamente* 'red-hairedly' in his novel *Rayuela*.

In general, though with important exceptions (cf. *difícil/difícilmente* 'difficult', *lleno* 'full', but 'fully' = *plenamente*), the set of Spanish adjectives that take *-mente* corresponds to the set of English adjectives that allow the adverbial suffix *-ly*. These are chiefly adverbs of manner.

The following do not take *-mente* (at least in normal styles):

- (a) Adjectives denoting physical appearance: *rojo* 'red', *negro* 'black', *calvo* 'bald', *gordo* 'fat', *cojo* 'lame', *viejo* 'old'/'aged', etc.
- (b) Adjectives denoting origin, nationality, religion: *cordobés* 'Cordoban', *argentino* 'Argentine', *protestante* 'Protestant', *musulmán* 'Muslim', etc. (Two exceptions are *católicamente* and *cristianamente*: *Tienes que educar a tus hijos católicamente* 'You must bring up your children in the Catholic manner'.)
- (c) Ordinal numbers, e.g. *segundo* 'second', *quinto* 'fifth', *vigésimo* 'twentieth'. (Exceptions: *primeramente* 'chiefly'/'firstly' and *últimamente* 'lately'/'lastly'. *En segundo lugar* = 'secondly'.)
- (d) Some adjectives, for no obvious reason, e.g. *vacío* 'empty', *lleno* 'full' (*plenamente* = 'fully'), *importante* 'important', and most adjectives in *-ón*, cf. *mandón* 'bossy', *peleón* 'aggressive'/'prone to start fights'.
- (e) Many verbal participles which cannot, by meaning, function as adverbs.

However, some Spanish participles take *-mente* whereas their English counterparts do not. The following are some of the many participle forms that may take *-mente*. They usually refer to behaviour, or to frequency, speed or some other idea that could have an adverbial use:

<i>abatido</i>	<i>abatidamente</i>	downcast
<i>abierto</i>	<i>abiertamente</i>	open(ly)
<i>acentuado</i>	<i>acentuadamente</i>	marked(ly)
<i>atrevido</i>	<i>atrevidamente</i>	daring(ly)
<i>debido</i>	<i>debidamente</i>	due/duly
<i>decidido</i>	<i>decididamente</i>	decided(ly)

<i>deliberado</i>	<i>deliberadamente</i>	deliberate(ly)
<i>equivocado</i>	<i>equivocadamente</i>	mistaken(ly)
<i>exagerado</i>	<i>exageradamente</i>	exaggerated(ly)
<i>irritado</i>	<i>irritadamente</i>	irritated(ly)
<i>perdido</i> ('lost')	<i>perdidamente</i>	hopeless(ly) (e.g. in love)
<i>reiterado</i>	<i>reiteradamente</i>	repeated(ly)
<i>resuelto</i>	<i>resueltamente</i>	resolute(ly)

31.2.5 Popular forms

Popular forms like *buenamente* and *malamente* are occasionally heard in familiar speech with specialized meanings:

Lo terminamos, pero malamente
Hazlo buenamente cuando puedas

We finished it, but it was rushed
 Do it in your own time when you can

The forms *?mayormente* 'a great deal'/'especially' (very common in Latin America), *otramente* 'otherwise' (= *de otra manera*) and *?mismamente*, cf. *?mismamente el cura* 'the priest himself', are considered substandard or popular.

31.2.6 Meaning of adverbs in *-mente*

The existence of a derived adverb in *-mente* does not mean that the adjective cannot itself function adverbially or that there does not exist an adverbial phrase with or without the same meaning. Constant reading and dictionary work are the only solution to this problem, e.g.:

en vano/vanamente
de inmediato/inmediatamente
directo/directamente
Siempre obra locamente/a lo loco

in vain/vainly
 immediately
 directly
 He always acts wildly/in a mad fashion

but only:

Está locamente enamorado

He's madly in love

31.2.7 Too many adverbs in *-mente*

It is bad style to include too many adverbs in *-mente* in a single paragraph: the final syllables set off ugly rhymes. The barbarous sentence *?Evidentemente, todas las lenguas evolucionan constantemente, y sería totalmente absurdo pretender detener arbitrariamente su crecimiento* makes passable English in literal translation – 'Clearly, all languages evolve constantly, and it would be totally absurd to attempt to arrest their growth arbitrarily' – but must be recast in Spanish along the lines of *Es evidente que todas las lenguas están en constante evolución, y sería totalmente absurdo pretender detener de manera arbitraria su crecimiento*.

A form in *-mente* can usually be replaced by *con* + an abstract noun or by some other adverbial phrase, e.g. *alegremente* = *con alegría* or *de un modo* (or *manera*) *alegre*, *rabiosamente* = *con rabia* or *de un modo* *rabioso*, *ferozmente* = *con ferocidad* or *de un modo* *feroz*. The sentence *Vivían de un modo tranquilo, feliz y libre* 'They lived quietly, happy and free' is much better Spanish than *Vivían tranquila, feliz y libremente*.

For a selection of adverbial phrases, see 31.3.2.

31.2.8 *-ísimo*

The suffix *-ísimo* (see 4.9) may be added (judiciously) to adverbs of manner and time. The result is very emphatic:

<i>claramente</i>	<i>clarísimamente</i>	extremely clearly
<i>intensamente</i>	<i>intensísimamente</i>	extremely intensely
<i>recientemente</i>	<i>recientísimamente</i>	extremely recently
<i>tiernamente</i>	<i>tiernísimamente</i>	extremely tenderly
<i>urgentemente</i>	<i>urgentísimamente</i>	extremely urgently

More common alternatives exist, e.g. *con gran claridad*, *con enorme intensidad*, *con gran urgencia*, etc.

Note

Lejos and *cerca* can also have *-ísimo* added to them: *lejísimos* (note the final s) and *cerquísima*. Colloquially *lejotes* can be used to denote uncomfortable distance, often preceded by *allá/allí*: *Esa casa está allí lejotes* 'That house is miles off/away'.

31.2.9 Adverbs in *-mente* to mean 'from a . . . point of view'

Adverbs in *-mente* are freely used to indicate point of view. This construction is much favoured in journalistic styles:

<i>Económicamente, este país va a la ruina</i>	Economically, this country is on the road to ruin
<i>Personalmente, lo dudo</i>	Personally, I doubt it
<i>Editorialmente, no lo apruebo</i>	From a publishing point of view, I don't approve of it

31.3 Adverbs of manner

31.3.1 General

These include words like *bien* 'well', *mal* 'badly', *despacio* 'slowly', *pronto* 'quickly', *adrede/aposta* 'on purpose', *igual* 'the same', as well as most of the adverbs formed with *-mente*.

There are often regional differences of usage, e.g. *deprisa* 'quickly' in Spain, and *aprisa* in Latin America: *Quiero ir muy aprisa* (A. Mastretta, dialogue, Mexico) 'I want to go very fast'.

There are countless adverbial phrases: *a propósito* 'deliberately', *en balde* 'in vain', *a contrapelo* 'unwillingly', *en serio* 'seriously'. A selection appears at 31.3.2.

Adverbs of manner can modify verbs, participles, adjectives or other adverbs:

<i>Habla despacio</i>	He talks slowly
<i>Esto está mal hecho</i>	This is badly made/This is the wrong thing to do
<i>Está bien</i>	It/He/She's okay
<i>Estoy totalmente agotado</i>	I'm totally exhausted
<i>Me da igual</i>	It's all the same to me
<i>Aquí estamos mejor/peor</i>	We're better/worse (off) here

A few can even modify nouns:

<i>Hace mucho tiempo que una cosa así no ocurría en la ONU (El País)</i>	It has been a long time since something like this happened in the UN
<i>Cenamos algunas cosas que ella traía en su equipaje, latas y así (F. Umbral, Spain)</i>	We had supper on a few things she was carrying in her luggage – tins and that sort of thing

<i>una niña bien</i>	a girl from a 'respectable' family (pejorative)
<i>dos coñacs con hielo, y dos cafés igual</i>	two cognacs with ice, and two coffees the same way

Bien and *así de* can intensify adjectives:

<i>Es bien lista</i>	She's pretty clever
<i>Bien bueno que está, ¿eh?</i>	Great, isn't it? (sarcastic)
<i>¿Adónde vas así de guapa? or . . . vas tan guapa?</i>	Where are you off to looking so pretty?

31.3.2 Adverbial phrases of manner

These are numerous. They often provide an elegant alternative to an unwieldy adverb in *-mente*. The following is a small sample:

<i>a buen paso</i>	at a smart pace
<i>a conciencia</i>	conscientiously
<i>El agua sale a chorros</i>	The water is pouring out
<i>a destiempo</i>	inopportunately
<i>a escondidas</i>	secretly/clandestinely
<i>a fuego lento</i>	on a low flame
<i>a hurtadillas</i>	by stealth
<i>a la carrera</i>	at full speed
<i>a la fuerza</i>	by force/under obligation
<i>(llorar) a lágrima viva</i>	to shed floods of tears
<i>a mano</i>	by hand
<i>a matacaballo</i>	at break-neck speed
<i>a medias</i>	by halves
<i>a oscuras</i>	in the dark
<i>a quemarropa</i>	point-blank
<i>a ratos perdidos</i>	at odd moments
<i>a regañadientes</i>	reluctantly/unwillingly
<i>a sabiendas de que . . .</i>	fully aware that . . .
<i>a tiempo</i>	in time (e.g. for the train)
<i>a tientas</i>	by touch/by feel
<i>al raso</i>	in the open/out of doors
<i>bajo cuerda</i>	on the sly
<i>con delirio/locura</i>	madly/passionately
<i>con frecuencia/a menudo</i>	frequently
<i>de balde</i>	free (= without paying)
<i>de continuo</i>	continuously
<i>de corrido</i>	at one go/straight off
<i>de costumbre</i>	usually
<i>de golpe</i>	suddenly
<i>de improviso</i>	unexpectedly
<i>(saberse/aprenderse) de memoria</i>	(learn) by heart
<i>de ordinario</i>	normally/usually
<i>de puntillas</i>	on tiptoe
<i>de rodillas</i>	kneeling
<i>de seguro</i>	for certain/sure
<i>de sobra</i>	in excess/more than enough
<i>(leer algo) de un tirón</i>	to read something in one sitting/ straight through
<i>en cambio</i>	on the other hand
<i>en confianza</i>	confidentially
<i>en cueros (vivos)/en pelota</i>	stark naked
<i>en el acto</i>	on the spot

en lo sucesivo
(hablar) por los codos

sin empacho
sin reserva
sin ton ni son

from now on/hereafter
to talk too much (lit. 'through the
elbows')

coolly/unconcernedly
unreservedly
willy-nilly/thoughtlessly

31.3.3 Adjectives as adverbs of manner

The masculine singular of a few adjectives may be used as an adverb, but only in certain phrases, e.g. *hablar claro* 'to speak clearly' but only *expresarse claramente/con claridad* 'to express oneself clearly':

Hablan alto/bajo

Lo hemos comprado barato/caro

El tren va directo a Tuy

Hay que tirar fuerte

Se me apiló firme (J. Cortázar, dialogue,
Argentina, Spain: *se me arrimó*)

Anda rápido que vamos a llegar tarde (see
31.3.6 for *rápido*)

Respiraba hondo como si le costara trabajo

Me sienta fatal

Él no juega limpio

They talk loudly/softly

We've bought it cheap/dear

The train goes direct to Tuy

You have to pull hard

He pushed himself tight up against me

walk fast or we'll arrive late

He was breathing deeply, as if with
difficulty

It doesn't suit me/agree with me at all

He doesn't play fair

The following are typical of familiar speech and are not to everyone's taste:

Lo hemos pasado estupendo/fantástico/bárbaro

La chaqueta le sienta bárbaro a Mariluz

Eso se hace fácil

We had a tremendous/fantastic time

The jacket looks terrific on Mariluz

That's dead easy/That's a cinch

Note

Colloquial Latin-American provides numerous examples unacceptable in Spain but admitted in informal styles in the Americas: *Qué lindo canta* 'Doesn't he/she sing prettily', *Pero toca muy bonito* 'But he plays really well' (both examples from Kany, 53-55), . . . *un gran número de mexicanos que piensan distinto que el PRI* (*Excelsior*, Mexico) ' . . . a large number of Mexicans who think differently from the PRI', *Inicialmente pensé que podíamos haber conseguido unos dólares fácil, sin problemas para la revolución* (*Vindicación de Cuba*, Cuba) 'Initially I thought we could easily have got a few dollars, without any problems for the Revolution'.

31.3.4 Adjectives used to modify both subject and verb

Very common in Spanish is the use of an adjective in combination with a verb to produce an effect more easily created by an adverb in English. This is not a true adverbial use of the adjective, since the adjective agrees with the number and gender of the subject. This construction is restricted in the spoken language to a limited range of verbs and adjectives.

The effect is to make the adjective act both as an adverb and an adjective, i.e. it modifies both the verb and the subject of the verb. Sometimes the construction is obligatory: *Las niñas cansadas dormían* 'The tired girls were sleeping' is not the same as *Las niñas dormían cansadas* which is most nearly translated as 'The girls were tired and asleep' or 'sleeping in their tiredness'. But one could hardly say *?Las niñas dormían cansadamente* 'The girls were sleeping tiredly' which modifies the verb but not the subject!

Obviously, this construction is confined to those adjectives that can equally well modify a noun or a verb, e.g. *inocente* 'innocent', *confuso*

'confused', *feliz* 'happy', but not adjectives like *harapiento* 'ragged' or *azul* 'blue' which can hardly modify a verb:

Se desvestió mientras se miraba distraído en el espejo del armario (J. Cortázar, Argentina; or *distraidamente*)
Las mujeres protestaban indignadas (or *indignadamente*)
Las máquinas de escribir teclateaban incansables
Sonrió tranquila . . . (J. Marsé, Spain)
Viven felices (normal style)

He got undressed as he gazed absent-mindedly at himself in the wardrobe mirror
 The women were protesting indignantly
 The typewriters were clattering tirelessly
 She smiled gently
 They live happily

31.3.5 Nouns used adverbially

For familiar constructions like *llover cantidad*, *divertirse horrores* see 31.4.7.

31.3.6 Rápido

Rápido is an adjective, and is correctly used in phrases like *tren rápido* 'fast train', *comidas rápidas* 'fast meals', etc.

As an adverb it is, like 'quick', familiar; *con prisa*, *deprisa*, *rápidamente*, *pronto* are correct adverbial forms: *¡Rápido (deprisa/pronto), que se va el tren!* 'Quick, the train's going!', *¡Fuera! ¡Rápido!* 'Get out! Quick!'. Forms like *Lo he hecho rápido* 'I've done it quickly' are familiar.

31.3.7 A la and a lo

Both may form adverbial phrases of manner, but *a la* followed by a feminine adjective is much more common than *a lo*, which is probably nowadays confined to set phrases:

tortilla a la francesa
despedirse a la francesa

Viven todavía a la antigua
a lo loco

plain omelette
 to take French leave (i.e. not say good-bye)
 They still live in the old style
 crazily/without stopping to think

Note

En plan . . . is rather colloquial, like '-style': *viajar en plan turista* 'to travel tourist-style', *hablar en plan Tarzan* 'to talk Tarzan-style'.

31.3.8 Position of adverbs of manner

For further remarks on the position of adverbs see 37.2.6 and 37.4.

An adverb of manner usually follows an intransitive verb:

Trabaja actualmente en una segunda novela
Este problema está íntimamente ligado al problema del paro
esa cara de asco que parece ser habitualmente la suya

He is now working on a second novel
 This problem is intimately linked to the problem of unemployment
 that look of disgust which seems habitually to be his

In a transitive sentence, an adverb may follow the object – *Habla griego correctamente* – or the verb – *Habla correctamente el griego* 'He speaks Greek perfectly/without making mistakes'.

The difference is usually almost imperceptible, but strictly speaking an adverb that follows the object modifies the whole verb phrase, whereas an adverb that precedes the object modifies only the verb. Thus *Robaba dinero con frecuencia* 'He frequently stole money', but *Robaba con frecuencia dinero* . . .

'He frequently stole money . . .' is the appropriate order if further items, e.g. jewellery, are to follow.

31.4 Intensifiers and moderators

31.4.1 General

Intensifiers and moderators intensify or weaken the force of a verb, adverb, adjective and, occasionally, noun. Typical intensifiers are *muy* 'very', *mucho/poco* 'much'/'little', *intensamente* 'intensely', *algo/más bien* 'rather', *increíblemente* 'incredibly', *sobremanera* (literary) 'exceedingly'. Many intensifiers have other functions, and are dealt with elsewhere, e.g. *algo* and *más bien* see 9.2, *demasiado* see 9.9, *mucho* and *poco* see 9.12.

New colloquial intensifiers appear and vanish as fashion dictates. *Requete-* used to be a popular prefix in Spain and has created permanent expressions like *requeteguapola* 'very good-looking' and *requetebién* 'extremely well done'. *Archi-* can still be found in *archiconocidolarchisabido* 'very well-known'. Nowadays, at least in Spain, any adjective can be colloquially reinforced by *super-*: *supertonto/superinteligente* 'extremely silly'/'extremely intelligent'.

31.4.2 *Muy*

Muy 'very' is originally an abbreviated form of *mucho*, and the full form must be used in isolation:

<i>Es muy inteligente</i>	He's very intelligent
<i>¿Es inteligente? Sí, mucho</i>	Is he intelligent? Yes, very

Note

Bien is sometimes used in Spain in the sense of 'very': *Me voy a dar una ducha bien caliente* 'I'm going to have a very hot shower'. This usage is more common in Latin America: *Es bien simpático* (Chilean informant) 'He's very likeable', *¿Si está bien viejo para ti!* (popular Mexican, quoted Arjona Iglesias, 1991, 78) 'He's really/pretty old for you!'.

31.4.3 Intensifiers in *-mente*

These cannot modify another adverb in *-mente*, i.e. 'He speaks English incredibly fluently' cannot be translated **Habla inglés increíblemente corrientemente* but must be recast, e.g. *Habla inglés con una soltura/facilidad increíble*:

<i>Ha actuado con admirable honradez</i>	He's acted admirably honestly/with admirable honesty
<i>Lo hicieron con una prisa absurda</i>	They did it absurdly quickly/with absurd haste
<i>Le voy a hablar con una franqueza total</i>	I'm going to talk to you totally frankly

31.4.4 *Más* and *menos*

For the use of *más* and *menos* in comparisons, see Chapter 5.

Más is used as an intensifier in familiar speech, without any comparative meaning:

<i>Es que eres más tonto . . .</i>	Heavens, are you stupid!
<i>Está más borracho . . .</i>	Is he drunk!

31.4.5 Lo as an intensifier

For *lo* in sentences like *Cuéntale lo bien que canta* ‘Tell her how well he sings’, *Camina lo más lentamente que puedas* ‘Walk as slowly as possible’, see 7.2.2.

31.4.6 Qué and cuán as intensifiers

Exclamatory *¿qué?* is discussed at 24.4, *¿cuán(to)?* at 24.6.

For *No recordaba lo guapa que eres* ‘I didn’t remember how attractive you are’, etc., see 7.2.2.

31.4.7 Nouns used as intensifiers

Familiar speech uses some nouns as intensifiers – not to every taste, as the translation shows:

<i>Lo pasamos bomba</i> (already old-fashioned?)	We had a terrific time (lit. ‘we had a bomb of a time’)
<i>Canta fenómeno</i>	He’s a smashing singer
<i>Nos aburrimos cantidad</i>	We were bored stiff/bored to death
<i>Nos hemos reído cantidad</i>	Did we have a laugh!

31.5 Adverbs of doubt

Words meaning ‘perhaps’, ‘probably’, ‘possibly’ may call for the subjunctive and are discussed under 16.3.

31.6 Adverbs of place

31.6.1 Aquí, ahí, allí

It is important to distinguish carefully between *ahí* and *allí*: to the untrained ear they tend to sound similar, at least in some varieties of Spanish. These adverbs are closely linked in meaning to the demonstratives:

<i>este</i>	this, near me	<i>aquí</i>	here, near me
<i>ese</i>	that	<i>ahí</i>	there
<i>aquel</i>	that, further away	<i>allí</i>	there, further away

In other words, *ahí* points to space near the hearer or to both hearer and speaker if they are in the same place. Misuse of *ahí* and *allí* produces a bizarre effect. Carnicer, *Nuevas reflexiones*, 24, remarks that to ask people from another country *¿Qué tal se vive ahí?* ‘What’s it like living just there?’, instead of *allí*, prompts them to look under their chairs.

<i>Vente aquí a pasar unos días con nosotros</i>	Come here and spend a few days with us
<i>Aquí construiremos la casa, ahí el garaje, y allí al final del jardín, la piscina</i>	We’ll build the house here, the garage there, and the swimming pool there at the bottom of the garden
<i>Deja la linterna ahí a tu lado</i>	Leave the torch there next to you
<i>Sería interesante visitar Groenlandia, pero no quisiera vivir allí</i>	It would be interesting to visit Greenland, but I wouldn’t like to live there

If the place referred to is out of sight, *ahí* is generally used if it is nearby or in the same town, *allí* for more remote places:

—*Lo he comprado en esa tienda.* ‘I bought it in that shop.’

—Ah, sí, yo compro siempre ahí
 Ya están ahí monsieur Fréjus y monsieur
 Bébé, y quieren cocktails (J. Cortázar,
 Argentina. dialogue; note *están ahí* =
 'have arrived')
 Si vas a Cáceres, mándame una postal desde
 allí
 Mi hermana nació en Caracas, y yo también
 nací allí

'Oh yes, I always shop there'
 M. Fréjus and M. Bébé are here, and they
 want cocktails

If you go to Cáceres send me a card
 from there
 My sister was born in Caracas, and I was
 born there too

However, native speakers may use *ahí* for *allí* (but not vice-versa) if they feel emotionally close to the place they are talking about: *¿Conoces la iglesia a la entrada del pueblo? Pues ahí/allí se casaron mis padres* 'Do you know the church on the way in to the village? Well, that's where my parents got married', —*Y al fin llegué a Manaos. De ahí era fácil pasar a Iquitos.* —*Y ¿ahí fue donde conociste al señor Julio Reátegui?* (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue) ' "And I eventually got to Manaos. From there it was easy to cross to Iquitos." "And that was where you met Sr Julio Reátegui?" '.

Notes

(i) Colloquially *por ahí* is used to mean 'somewhere' when the speaker is indifferent or secretive about the exact location: —*¿Dónde has estado?* —*Por ahí* ' "Where have you been?" "Somewhere" ' —*¿Dónde está Julia?* —*Por ahí* ' "Where's Julia?" "She's somewhere around" '.

(ii) *Ahí* may encroach on *allí* in Latin-American speech: *Ahí está, dijo, y ahí estaba porque él lo conocía . . .* (G. García Márquez, Colombia, dialogue, pointing to a comet in the sky) ' "There it is", he said, and there it was because he was familiar with it'.

31.6.2 Acá, allá

In the Southern Cone and in many other parts of Latin America, *acá* has more or less replaced *aquí*, even in good writing: *Acá en la Argentina si querés una taza de té, tenés que beber mate* = in Peninsular Spanish *Aquí en Argentina, si quieres una taza de té, tienes que beber mate* 'Here in Argentina if you feel like a cup of tea you have to drink *mate*'.

In Spain, *acá* and *allá* are much less common than *aquí*, *ahí*, *allí*, and denote vague or non-specific location or, most commonly, movement (often with the preposition *para*):

Ven acá/aquí, que te voy a contar una cosa

Come here, I'm going to tell you something

Íbamos allá/hacia allí cuando nos le/lo encontramos

We were on the way there when we ran into him

Que se venga para acá en cuanto pueda

He must come here as soon as he can

Notes

(i) *Allá* is often used of large distances in Latin America and occasionally in Spain. It can also in both regions express vague yearnings. In time phrases it emphasizes remoteness and may be obligatory: *Allá/Allí en Argentina tenemos mucha familia* (*allí* in Spain) 'We have a lot of family out there in Argentina', *Nos casamos allá en los años veinte* (not *allí*) 'We got married way back in the twenties', *El sur era y es acentuadamente indio; allá la cultura tradicional está todavía viva* (O. Paz, Mexico) 'The south was and is markedly Amerindian; (down) there traditional culture is still alive', *Al otro lado de las lágrimas, allá arriba en lo alto de su rabia, más allá de las ramas del almendro y de las palmeras . . .* (J. Marsé, Spain) 'On the other side of her tears, up there high in her rage, beyond the branches of the almond tree and the palms . . . '.

(ii) *Acá* and *allá* can take an intensifier, unlike *aquí*, *ahí*, *allí*: *más allá del sistema solar*

'beyond the solar system', *más acá de la frontera* 'on this side of the frontier', *Muévelo un poco más acá/hacia aquí* 'Move it this way a bit', *¡Un poquito más acá!* 'This way a bit!' *lo más acá/allá posible* 'as far over here/there as possible'.

El más allá is 'the Beyond' of occult literature.

(iii) *Allá* with a pronoun translates 'Let him/her get on with it', 'It's your look-out', etc. *Allá él si hace tonterías* 'If he wants to fool about, that's his affair', *Bueno, allá tú si no me haces caso* 'Well, if you don't pay any attention to me, it's your problem'.

(iv) *Acá* is sometimes used in time expressions in informal language, though it sounds a little old-fashioned (at least in Spain): *¿De cuándo acá no se dice hola a los amigos?* (*desde cuándo . . .*) 'Since when have people not been saying "hello" to their friends?', *Desde las elecciones acá, este país ya no tiene remedio* 'Since the elections, this country's been beyond hope', *De un tiempo acá se le nota cansada* (*desde un tiempo a esta parte . . .*) 'She's been looking tired for some time now'.

31.6.3 Use of adverbs of place as pronouns

One hears uneducated speakers use *aquí/ahí/allí* for *éste/ése/aquél*: *aquí me dice* = *éste me dice* 'this one here says to me' (itself very familiar). The same phenomenon occurs in Latin America, and also with *acá/allá*.

31.6.4 Adverbs of place with prepositions

All the adverbs of place can be preceded by *de, desde, hacia, hasta, por* and, less commonly, *para* (for which see *acá/allá*).

Los melocotones de aquí son mejores que los de Estados Unidos

Mira el sombrero que lleva la señora de allí

Desde aquí se ve el mar

Se sale por aquí

The peaches (from) here are better than the ones from America

Look at the hat that lady over there is wearing

You can see the sea from here

This is the way out

31.6.5 Dentro/adentro, fuera/afuera

'Inside' and 'outside' respectively.

In Spain *dentro* and *fuera* are preferred after prepositions (except perhaps *para*) and also to form prepositional phrases when followed by *de*. *Afuera* and *adentro* strictly speaking denote motion *towards* and should be used only in this sense, although they are occasionally found in isolation with the meaning of *fuera, dentro*.

Peninsular usage:

Por dentro era negro, y por fuera blanco

Dentro había flores en macetas

Dentro de la caja había otra

Ven (a)dentro y te lo explicaré

Vamos a cenar fuera

He estado fuera unos días

Al acabar el discurso se oyeron gritos de

¡fuera! ¡fuera!

¡Las manos fuera de Cuba!

Afuera quedaba el domingo de verano,

despoblado y soso (F. Umbral, Spain).

Poetic: *fuera* is more normal in Spain)

On the inside it was black, on the outside white

Inside there were flowers in pots

Inside the box was another

Come inside and I'll explain it to you

We're eating out (tonight)/We're having dinner outside

I've been away for a couple of days

When the speech ended shouts of 'out! out!' were heard

Hands off Cuba!

Outside was the summer Sunday, empty (lit. 'depopulated') and lifeless

Latin-American usage:

Afuera and *adentro* are the most common forms. *Adentro de* and *afuera de* are also used as prepositional phrases, this usage being considered normal in Argentina and colloquial in most other Latin-American countries:

<i>Adentro de Aqueronte hay lágrimas, tinieblas, crujir de dientes</i> (J.L. Borges, Argentina; Spain <i>dentro de</i>)	Within Acheron there are tears, darkness, gnashing of teeth
<i>Afuera en el parque, y adentro, por la casa entera seguían los disparos</i> (José Donoso, Chile; Spain <i>fuera, dentro</i>)	Outside in the park, and inside, throughout the house, the shooting continued
<i>El perro se quedó afuera</i> (Spain <i>fuera</i>)	The dog was left outside/stayed outside

31.6.6 Abajo, debajo de

For the prepositions *bajo*, *debajo de* see 34.3.

Abajo means 'down below'/'downstairs': *Te espero abajo* 'I'll wait downstairs'. However, *abajo de* is often used in Latin America for the prepositional phrase *debajo de* 'underneath':

<i>¿Chofi guarda las quincenas abajo del colchón?</i> (A. Mastretta, Mexico; <i>debajo de</i> in Spain)	Does Chofi keep her salary under the mattress?
<i>La nevera está abajo del bar</i> (C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue; <i>debajo de</i> in Spain)	The fridge is under the bar

31.6.7 Detrás, detrás de and atrás

Atrás 'behind'/'backwards' denotes backwards motion in Spain whereas *detrás* and the prepositional phrase *detrás de* 'behind' denote place:

<i>dar un paso atrás</i>	to move a step backwards
<i>Ponte detrás</i>	Stand behind
<i>detrás de mí/detrás de la mesa</i>	behind me/the table

In Latin America *atrás de* often means *detrás de*:

<i>Las demás me veían desde atrás de la mesa</i> (A. Mastretta, Mexico; <i>me miraban . . .</i> in Spain)	The others looked at me from behind the table
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31.6.8 Delante, delante de and adelante

In Spain *delante* means 'in front' and the prepositional phrase *delante de* 'in front of' denotes place and *adelante* 'forward(s)'/ 'onward(s)' denotes motion forward:

<i>Yo iba delante</i>	I was walking ahead
<i>Delante de ti no hablará</i>	She won't say anything in front of you
<i>Sigue adelante que yo te alcanzaré</i>	Go on ahead. I'll catch up with you

Alante is a popular variant for *adelante*.

In colloquial Latin America *adelante de* is often used for *delante de*, but this is not accepted in Spain.

Notes

(i) Only *adentro*, *afuera*, *abajo*, *atrás*, *delante* and *adelante* should be intensified: *más adentro/abajo/atrás* 'further inside/down/behind', *más afuera* or *más hacia fuera* 'more to the outside', *más hacia delante* 'further forwards'. *Más adelante* means 'later on', e.g. *Ya hablaremos más adelante* 'We'll talk later on'.

(ii) Omission of *de* in the prepositional phrase, common in Latin America, heard in Spain, is considered incorrect: *dentro de mi corazón*, *fuera de la casa*.

(iii) *Fuera de* can mean *aparte de* 'apart from' but is rather colloquial: *Fuera de él no hay nadie en que yo pueda confiar* 'Apart from him, there's no one I can trust' (some grammarians prefer *excepto él*).

(iv) *Atrás* is also used in the time phrases *años/meses/días atrás* 'some years/months/days ago'.

(v) *En adelante* can also be used in time phrases and in quantities: *Para esto necesitas de un millón en adelante* 'For this you'll need a million or more', *De ahora en adelante no lo vuelvo a hacer* 'From now on I won't do it again'.

31.7 Adverbs of time

31.7.1 Ya

Ya has a wide variety of uses. In many common constructions its meaning is determined by the tense of the verb that it modifies:

<i>Vienen ya</i>	They're coming right now
<i>Ya llegarán</i>	They'll arrive, for sure
<i>Ya han llegado</i>	They've already arrived
<i>Ya llegaron (Latin America)</i>	They already arrived
<i>Ya no vienen</i>	They're not coming any more
<i>Ya no llegarán</i>	They won't arrive any more
(but only <i>Aún/Todavía no han llegado</i>)	They haven't arrived yet)

Further examples:

los autores que aportaron nuevos recursos estilísticos al ya idioma castellano (or al que ya era idioma . . .)

Eres hombre ya/Ahora eres un hombre

¿Quién se acuerda ya de lo que era el Charleston?

Estaba perdido, extraviado en una casa ajena donde ya ni nada ni nadie le suscitaba el menor vestigio de afecto (G. García Márquez, Colombia)

Ya desde mucho antes, Amaranta había renunciado a toda tentativa de convertirla en una mujer útil (idem)

the authors who contributed new stylistic resources to what was already the Castilian language

You're a man now

Who can remember what the Charleston was any more?

He was lost, adrift in a strange house where nothing and nobody aroused the slightest trace of affection in him any more

Long before this (already), Amaranta had abandoned all attempts to change her into a useful woman

Ya also has idiomatic uses, particularly with the non-past tenses. It can indicate impatience, accumulating frustration, fulfilled expectations, resignation, certainty about the future or, in negative sentences, denial of something expected:

Iros, iros a la playa, que ya me quedo yo aquí a lavar la ropa (Carmen Godoy in Cambio16; iros is familiar Peninsular usage for idos. See 17.2.4 for discussion)

Lleva seis meses en la cama. Si eso no es grave, pues ya me dirás

Sirve ya la cena, que hemos esperado bastante

Por mí, que se vaya ya

El estudiante de nuestros días – ya no pensaré en el estudiante del año 2000 o 2500 . . . (Variedades, 174)

Go on, off you go to the beach while I stay here washing the clothes (martyred tone)

He's been in bed six months. If that's not serious, then you tell me what is
Serve supper now, we've waited long enough

He can go right now, as far as I'm concerned

The student of our day – I shan't even consider the student of the year 2000 or 2500 . . .

Ya le pasaré la cuenta cuando gane el gallo (G. García Márquez, Colombia, dialogue: *ya* here makes a promise more certain)

¡Basta ya! ¡Calla ya!

¡Ya está bien!

Bueno, eso es el colmo ya

Ya puedes tener buen olfato con la nariz que tú tienes

Por mí, ya puede llover, que tenemos tienda de campaña

Hitler habría sido todavía peor – y ya es decir – si a su criminal racismo hubiera juntado un fanatismo religioso (ABC, Spain)

Cuando ya acabemos de limpiar la casa . . .

No, no, ya te digo que él no sabía nada de todo aquello

¡Ya tuviste que contarme el final!

Ya lo sé

Ya empezamos . . .

Ya era hora

Ya siéntate y deja de interrumpir

(A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue, impatient tone¹)

—*El jefe quiere hablar conmigo. Está muy enfadado. —Ya será menos*

I'll send you the bill when your cockerel/rooster wins

That's enough! Not another word!

That's enough!

Well, that is the limit!

You can well have a good sense of smell with the nose you've got

As far as I'm concerned, it can go ahead and rain – we've got a tent

Hitler would have been even worse – and that's saying something – if he had added religious fanaticism to his criminal racism

When we finally finish cleaning the house . . .

No, no, I'm telling you he knew nothing about all that

You would have to tell me the ending!

I already know/I know

(Oh dear) here we go again . . .

It's about time

Sit down and stop interrupting

'The boss wants to talk to me. He's very angry'. 'Come on, it won't be that bad'

Notes

(i) *Ya . . . ya* is a literary alternative for *o . . . o* 'either . . . or': *Ya porque la idea del matrimonio acabara por asustarle, ya porque no pudiera olvidar a María, no apareció en la iglesia* 'Either because the idea of marriage eventually frightened him or because he could not forget Maria, he did not appear at the church'.

(ii) *Ya* may be an abbreviation of *Ya lo sé* 'I know', or *Ya entiendo* 'I understand': —*Cuando veas la luz verde pulsa el botón rojo. —Ya* "'When you see the green light, push the red button.'" "Right/Understood".

(iii) *Desde ya* 'straightaway' is an expression from the Southern Cone which is sometimes now heard in Spain.

31.7.2 Recién

In Spain *recién* can only appear before participles, e.g. *recién pintado* 'newly painted', *recién casado* 'newly wed', *recién divorciado* 'recently divorced', *un chico recién salido del colegio* 'a boy who has recently left school'. Its use before other parts of speech is very rare.

The use of *recién* as a free-standing adverb of time is one hallmark of Latin-American Spanish everywhere. It is very common in speech and also appears even in quite formal written language.

It has two basic meanings:

(a) 'Right now' or 'just now':

Recién lo vi (Spain *Le acabo de ver*)

—*¿Cuándo lo dijo?* —*Recién* (Spain *ahora mismo*)

I've just seen him

'When did he say it?' 'Just now'

¹ In Spain the *ya* is placed after the imperative: *¡Siéntate ya!* 'Will you sit down!'

(b) 'Only', as in 'only now', 'only this year'. This usage is colloquial in some regions:

Recién mañana llegará (Spain *No llegará hasta mañana*)

He won't be here till tomorrow

Y él recién entonces se da cuenta de que está herida porque las manos se le están manchando de la sangre de ella (M. Puig, Argentina, dialogue; Spain: . . . *sólo entonces se da cuenta* . . .)

And only then he realizes that she's injured because his hands are being stained with her blood

Used thus, *recién* precedes the word or phrase it modifies. There is a colloquial diminutive *reciencito*.

31.7.3 *Todavía, aún, ya no*

Todavía and *Aún* both mean 'still'/'yet' and are synonymous. With words like *menos, más, menor* and *mayor* they are translated as 'even'. *Aún* 'still' must be distinguished from *aun* meaning 'even'; the latter discussed at 31.8.

Before or after comparative adjectives and adverbs (including *más* and *menos*), 'even' is translated by *todavía, aún* or occasionally *incluso* (not by *aun*):

Todavía/aún están aquí

They are still here

No han venido aún/todavía

They haven't come yet

Su cara puede verse menos bonita aún, se lo aseguro (C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue; or *todavía menos/menos bonita todavía*)

I can assure you, your face can be even less pretty

Es todavía/aún/incluso/hasta más difícil de lo que yo pensaba

It's even more difficult than I thought

31.7.4 *Luego and entonces*

Both words are translatable as 'then' but they usually mean different things.

(a) As time words, *entonces* means 'then'/'at that moment', whereas *luego* means 'afterwards'/'later on'. *Luego* in this sense is stressed: *Luego viene/Viene luego* 'He's coming later'. If the *luego* is not stressed here, it means 'so'/'in that case':

Abrí la puerta, y entonces me di cuenta de lo que había pasado (*luego* here would mean *después* 'afterwards')

I opened the door, and then realized what had happened

Entonces supe que Mario había mentado (*luego* would mean 'later on')

I realized then that Mario had lied

Desde entonces he sido feliz

From that time on I have been happy

Recuerdo que los cines de entonces siempre apestaban a agua de colonia el entonces catedrático de griego

I remember that cinemas at that time always stank of Eau de Cologne the professor of Greek at that time/the then professor of Greek

Gary Hart derrotó al hasta entonces favorito demócrata Walter Mondale

Gary Hart defeated the until then democrat favourite Walter Mondale

¿Quién es? Te lo diré luego

Who is it? I'll tell you later

Lo haré luego

I'll do it later

Hasta luego (cf. *Hasta ahora*, 'See you in a minute')

See you later

Según dice mamá, que luego estuvo seis años liada con Tey . . . (J. Marsé, Spain)

According to mother, who later on was involved with Tey for six years . . .

Note

luego de hacerlo (literary) = *después de hacerlo* 'after doing it'.

(b) Both *entonces* and *luego* may mean 'in that case'. In this meaning *luego* is not stressed:

En Madrid hace 40 grados, en Sevilla 38. Entonces hace más calor en Madrid que en Sevilla (or Luego, hace . . .)
—Es . . . mi secreto. —Entonces ya me lo contarás. Los secretos siempre se cuentan (Bueno Vallejo, Spain, dialogue, *luego* not possible in conjunction with *ya*)
Pienso luego existo (set phrase)

In Madrid it's 40 degrees, in Seville 38.
In that case it's hotter in Madrid than in Seville
'It's my secret'. 'Then you'll soon tell me.
Secrets always get told'

I think therefore I am

Notes

(i) Use of *luego* to mean 'straightaway'/'immediately' is a regionalism in Spain, but it is common in certain Latin-American countries.

(ii) The following words also convey the idea of 'then': *después*, 'after', *acto seguido* 'next'/'immediately after', *a continuación* 'next'/'immediately after', *en seguida* 'immediately afterwards'.

31.8 Incluso, hasta, aun, siquiera

All these words may translate the English 'even' in such sentences as 'He even speaks Russian and Greek', 'Even in England the sun shines sometimes'.

Incluso and *aun* are synonyms but nowadays *incluso* is more often used:

<i>Incluso/Aun hoy día algunas personas siguen creyendo en las hadas</i>	Even today some people still believe in fairies
<i>Incluso/aun si le das dinero, no lo hará</i>	Even if you give him money he won't do it

Hasta, literally 'until', may also mean 'even':

<i>Ha llovido tanto que hasta/incluso/aun los patos están hartos</i>	It's rained so much that even the ducks have had enough/are sick of it
--	--

Siquiera means 'at least':

<i>Dame siquiera mil pesetas</i>	Give me one thousand pesetas at least/if nothing else
<i>Siquiera el General es generoso. Mira el coche que me regaló (A. Mastrella, Mexico, dialogue)</i>	At least the General is generous. Look at the car he gave me

Ni siquiera translates 'not even':

<i>Bueno, los ingleses . . . los autos por la izquierda . . . ni siquiera han aceptado el sistema métrico (C. Catania, Argentina, interview; los autos = los coches in Spain)</i>	Well, the English . . . cars on the left-hand side of the road . . . they haven't even accepted the metric system
---	---

Note

Inclusive is used in Latin America where Peninsular Spanish uses *incluso*: *Para que una persona con un malestar llegue a un bienestar, debe pasar inclusive por un malestar peor que el que ya tenía* (Interview in *Cuba Internacional*; Spain *malestar* = 'discomfort', 'indisposition') 'For people with troubles to get out of them (lit. 'to arrive at well-being'), they have to pass through even worse troubles than they already had'. Grammarians condemn this because *inclusive* should mean 'inclusive', but the construction is deeply rooted in Latin America, even in educated speech and in writing.

32

Expressions of time

32.1 General

This chapter covers such matters as the expression of duration, e.g. 'for *n* days', 'since . . .', 'during . . .', 'still', 'ago', words like 'again', and dates.

32.2 Duration, i.e. 'for *n* days', etc.

Unlike English, European Spanish often uses – and Latin-American normally uses – the present tense to indicate events that are still in progress or are likely to recur: *Es la tercera vez que pierdo la misa del domingo desde que tengo uso de razón* (G. García Márquez, Colombia, dialogue; Spain . . . *què me pierdo/que me he perdido la misa . . .*). English uses past tenses in the same kind of sentence: 'It's the third time I've missed Sunday Mass since I've been able to reason'.

If the event was continuing in the past, European Spanish often uses – and Latin-American normally uses – the imperfect tense whereas English uses the pluperfect: *Desde que llegó a Europa por primera vez andaba en el landó familiar* (G. García Márquez; Spain *iba a todas partes/había ido a todas partes . . .*) 'Since he'd first arrived from Europe he had been driving around in the family landau'.

English speakers constantly forget this and use the compound tenses (perfect and pluperfect) for both completed and incomplete events: 'How long have you been in New York?' (the hearer may or may not be remaining there).¹ But the Spanish perfect tense is a past tense, so *¿Cuánto tiempo has estado en Nueva York?* means much the same as *¿Cuánto tiempo estuviste en Nueva York?* 'How long did you stay in New York?'. The present tense would be used if the hearer is intending to remain there: *¿Cuánto tiempo hace que estás en Nueva York?* or *¿Cuánto tiempo llevas en Nueva York?* French and Italian have similar rules (*Vous êtes ici depuis combien de temps?* 'How long have you been here?', *Da quando sei a Roma?* 'How long have you been in Rome?').

32.3 Translating 'for' in time phrases

There are various possibilities, not all of them interchangeable, e.g. *llevar . . .*, *hace . . .*, *desde hace . . .*, *desde, durante, en, por, para*.

¹ North-American readers may find that they want to substitute simple pasts for the typically British perfect tenses in some of the translations in this chapter.

32.3.1 Llevar

This verb can only be used when the event is or was still in progress: one cannot say *Llevo seis meses en España* 'I've been in Spain for six months' after one has left the country for good: *He estado/Estuve seis meses . . .*

A following verb appears in the gerund form, but the gerund cannot be negated: 'I haven't been smoking for years' = *Hace años que no fumo/Llevo años que no fumo/Llevo años sin fumar/No fumo desde hace años*, never **Llevo años no fumando*:

<i>Llevamos cinco años viviendo juntos</i> (Carmen Rico-Godoy, Spain)	We've been living together for five years
<i>Llevo veinte años peleando y está como un gallo nuevo</i> (interview in <i>Granma</i> , Cuba)	He's been fighting (i.e. boxing) for twenty years, and he's like a fresh fighting cock
<i>Llevo siete días aquí contigo</i> (C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue)	I've been here with you for seven days
<i>Llevo aquí desde las seis</i>	I've been here since six o'clock
<i>El ascensor lleva estropeado dos meses</i> (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain)	The lift/elevator has been broken for two months

If the event or state *was* still in progress at the time, the imperfect of *llevar* is used (**he llevado . . .* is not possible): *Llevaba dos años en Madrid cuando me puse enfermo* 'I'd/He'd/She'd been in Madrid for two years when I fell ill', *Llevabas años diciéndolo* 'You'd been saying it for years'.

Notes

(i) *Llevar* definitely implies a significant period of time. One would not say **Sólo/Solo llevo unos segundos aquí* for *Sólo/Solo he estado aquí unos segundos* 'I've only been here for a few seconds'.

(ii) This construction with *llevar* is very common in Peninsular speech, but less common in written language than *hace . . . /hacia . . .* (described in the next section).

It is little used in the Southern Cone, particularly in Buenos Aires. In Latin America it is widely replaced by *tener*: *Tengo dos años aquí*, 'I've been here for two years', *Tenía pocos meses de gobernar cuando logró el cambio* (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue) 'He'd only been acting as Governor for a few months when he managed to bring about the change'. This construction is also found in formal writing.²

(iii) The following idioms are noteworthy: *Esto me va a llevar mucho tiempo* 'This is going to take me a long time', *Ana me lleva tres años* 'Ana's three years older than me/I'.

32.3.2 Hace/hacia/hará . . . que . . .

Hace dos años que estoy en Madrid means the same as *Llevo dos años en Madrid* 'I've been in Madrid for two years (and my stay is continuing)'.

The present tense is used for events that continue into the present. If the sentence is negative, the perfect tense is, however, optionally found in Spain, but not usually in Latin America: *Hace años que no la he visto/no la veo* 'I haven't seen her for years'. Use of past tenses for the present in conjunction with *hace* is rejected by many Latin-Americans, aversion to the compound tenses being apparently stronger in the Southern Cone than elsewhere.³

² cf. *Aunque tengan muchos años de vivir allí . . . nadie los confundiría con los norteamericanos auténticos* (Octavio Paz, Mexico) 'Although they've been living there for years, no one would take them for true North-Americans'.

³ There is, however, much regional variation in this matter. See 14.9.7.

Hacía + the imperfect + *que* translates 'for' in past time and is followed by the imperfect to denote an action that was still in progress: *Hacía tiempo que nos veíamos* 'We had been seeing one another for some time'. In this case the pluperfect changes the meaning: *Hacía tiempo que nos habíamos visto* 'It had been some time since we had seen one another'.

Hará . . . que + the present tense is commonly used in suppositions or approximations: *Hará dos años que no la veo* (Spain also . . . *no la he visto*) 'It must be two years since I've seen her'. Further examples:

Affirmative sentences:

<i>Hace tiempo que pienso/tengo pensado ir a verla</i>	For some time now I've been thinking of going to see her
<i>¿Hace cuánto tiempo que es usted el amor de Joaquín?</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue; Spain <i>¿Cuánto tiempo hace que es usted la amante de Joaquín?</i>)	How long have you been Joaquín's lover?

Negative sentences:

<i>Hace dos días que no la veo</i> (L. Spota, Mexico, dialogue; Spain also . . . <i>no la he visto</i>)	I haven't seen her for two days
<i>Como no bebo hace tiempo . . .</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue)	Since I haven't been drinking for some time

Notes

(i) One cannot use the present tense if no preposition is used: *He estado tres horas aquí* 'I've been here three hours' (with the implication 'and I'm just leaving'), not **Estoy tres horas aquí*, also *Llevo tres horas aquí/Hace tres horas que estoy aquí/Estoy aquí desde hace tres horas*.

(ii) The verb *hacer* does not appear in the plural in this construction: **Hacían años que no hablaban de otra cosa* 'They hadn't talked of anything else for years' is bad Spanish for *hacía años que . . .*. This is a common error of popular speech.

(iii) The imperfect tense may be used in negative sentences with a change of meaning. *Hace años que no tomábamos café juntos* 'We haven't had coffee together for years' differs from *Hace años que no tomamos café juntos* in that the former would be said while one is actually drinking coffee with the friend, whereas the latter implies that it would be a good idea to have coffee together.

(iv) *En* may be used in the same way as the English 'in' in negative sentences, e.g. 'I hadn't seen her in/for three days'; see 32.5.

32.3.3 Translating 'for' when the event is no longer in progress

Verb in a past tense and no preposition (as in English):

<i>Estuvo una temporada en Guatemala, y luego se volvió a California</i>	He was in Guatemala (for) a while and then he returned to California
<i>Esperamos cinco minutos en la parada</i>	We waited at the stop (for) five minutes
<i>Cuánto tiempo ha estado usted/estuvo en Madrid?</i> (addressed to someone whose stay is over)	(For) how long were you in Madrid?

Hace . . . que with a preterite tense means 'ago' and is discussed at 32.4.

32.3.4 Durante

The basic meaning of *durante* is 'during': *durante el siglo veinte* 'during the twentieth century', *durante los tres meses que estuvo aquí* 'in the three months he was here'. Unlike 'during' it is regularly used before plural nouns to mean 'for

a specific period of time': *durante años* 'in years', *durante muchos siglos* 'for/in many centuries'.

When the event terminates with the period mentioned, the verb is in the preterite tense: *Fue Presidente durante tres años* 'He was President for three years' (and then died or stopped being President). Compare *Era Presidente durante los tres años de la Revolución* 'He was President during the three years of the Revolution' (and may have been before or after):

<i>Durante años nunca supe si me contaban fantasías o verdades</i> (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)	For years I never knew whether they were telling me truths or fantasies
<i>Fue incapaz de hablar durante muchas horas</i> (J.-M. Merino, Spain)	He was unable to speak for hours (on that occasion)

But *Después de los ataques de asma, era incapaz de hablar durante muchas horas* (imperfect because the condition is habitual) 'After the asthma attacks he used to be unable to speak for hours'.

Notes

(i) Spanish uses the preterite continuous (*estuve hablando, estuvo leyendo*, etc.) to emphasize that an event continued uninterrupted throughout a period of time: *Durante un cuarto de hora estubo mirándote* (L. Spota, Mexico, dialogue) 'He was gazing at you for a quarter of an hour'.

(ii) *Durante* is associated with the verb *durar* 'to last' and is therefore appropriate for long periods of time or periods considered long by the speaker: one does not say **durante un segundo*, but one could say *durante cinco minutos* 'for five minutes' or *Quiero que hables sin parar durante cinco segundos* 'I want you to speak non-stop for five seconds' (seen as a long time). Spanish uses *por* for short periods of time or whenever the speaker wishes to emphasize short duration. See the next section for discussion.

(iii) *En* may be used for *durante* in Latin America: *Olga no habló en varios minutos* (L. Spota, Mexico) 'Olga didn't speak for several minutes'. Use of *en* may also correspond to English in negative sentences like 'I haven't smoked in/for years'; see 32.5.

En may also be an alternative for *dentro de* in sentences like *Tienes que bajar dentro/delen 5 minutos* 'You've got to be down in five minutes'. See 32.5 for discussion.

32.3.5 *Por* meaning 'for' in time phrases

Por is used instead of *durante* meaning 'for' when referring to brief moments of time (seconds, minutes, etc.) or whenever the speaker emphasizes the shortness of the period.

The preposition may be omitted altogether in such sentences:

<i>Entraré sólo (por) un momento</i>	I'll come in just for a moment
<i>Por un momento, Bernardo estuvo a punto de ocultar los motivos de la visita . . .</i> (J.-M. Merino, Spain; set phrase)	For a moment he was about to conceal the reasons for his visit
<i>Por un instante, Félix sintió que una pantalla plateada los separaba a él y a Mary</i> (C. Fuentes, Mexico; set phrase)	For a moment Félix felt that a silver screen was separating him and Mary

Notes

(i) *Por* and *para* are interchangeable in time expressions fixing the duration of some future need (see also 32.3.6 for *para* in time phrases): *Sólo/Solo queremos la habitación por/para unos días* 'We only want the room for a few days'.

(ii) Latin-Americans may use *por* where Peninsulars use nothing or *durante*: *Por cuatro o cinco años nos tuvieron acorralados* (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue; Spain *durante . . .*) 'They had us cornered for four or five years', *Aquí permaneció por casi dos semanas* (L. Sepúlveda, Chile; Spain *durante . . .* or no preposition) 'He stayed there for nearly two months'.

32.3.6 Para in expressions of duration

Para is used to translate the idea of 'for' a specified period of time in the future:

Tenemos agua *para* tres días
Vamos a tener lluvia *para* rato

We've enough water for three days
We are going to have rain for some time

Note

Ir para is a colloquial translation of 'for nearly . . .': *Va para cinco años que trabajo aquí* 'I've been working here for nearly five years'/'It's getting on for five years that I've been working here'.

32.3.7 Desde

Desde translates 'since' or, sometimes, 'for'. *Desde que* is used before verb phrases, *desde* before singular noun phrases, and *desde hace/hacia* before plural or numbered nouns to translate 'since . . . ago'.

Unlike the English 'since', *desde* can appear before nouns: *Desde niña hablo catalán* 'I've spoken Catalan since I was a little girl'.

Desde que se casó con el millonario ese, ya no se habla con sus amigos
No viene/ha venido desde marzo
Estudio castellano desde hace un año/tres años

Since she married that millionaire she doesn't talk to her friends any more
He hasn't come since March
I've been studying Spanish for one year/three years (lit. 'from since one/three years ago')

Events that are still in progress require the present tense, events that were still in progress require the imperfect. However, European Spanish optionally uses the perfect tense with *desde* even when the action is still in progress.

He estado/Estoy aquí desde marzo
¿Desde cuándo se hace eso? (se ha hecho eso)

I've been here since March
Since when have people been doing that?

Desde entonces nada le ha durado mucho
(J. Marias, Spain; Lat. Am. . . . *nada le dura*)

Since then nothing has lasted long for him

Lo sé desde que te vi en el hospital
(G. García Marquez, Colombia, dialogue; Spain *lo he sabido*)

I've known it since I saw you in the hospital

Events that are or were no longer in progress require a past tense, normally the compound tense (perfect, pluperfect) in Spain and the preterite in much of Latin America:

He fumado tres veces desde octubre/Había fumado tres veces desde entonces
Claro que he vuelto a hacerlo/volví a hacerlo desde entonces (the preterite may be preferred in Lat. Am.)

I have smoked three times since October/I had smoked three times since then
Obviously I've done it again since then

Desde hace/desde hacía are required before plural nouns and before numbers. The compound tenses are possible in Peninsular Spanish:

Me tranquilizo pensando que todos los adolescentes se han comportado exactamente igual desde hace tres mil años
(C. Rico-Godoy, Spain; *se comportan* possible in Spain, normal in Lat. Am.)

I console myself with the thought that all adolescents have been acting the same way for three thousand years

Eso es un campo de batalla desde hace un año That's been a battle-field for a year now
(M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue; Spain
also *ha sido*)

Notes

(i) Literary styles often use a *-ra* or *-se* form of the verb after *desde* to indicate a past event: *Esta/Ésta es la primera vez que menciona el asunto desde que ingresara/ingresase/ingresó en la cárcel* 'This is the first time he has mentioned the matter since he entered prison'. This phenomenon is discussed further at 14.10.3.

(ii) The following Mexican example shows that other tenses may be used for events that are still in progress: *Desde que tenía diez años soñé con ser estrella de cine* (L. Spota, dialogue) 'Since I was ten I've dreamt of being a film-star'.

(iii) 'Since' may sometimes need to be translated by *hace que* . . . /*hacia que* with a past tense: *Hace ya ocho años que nos casamos* 'It's eight years since we (got) married'/'We got married eight years ago'.

(iv) *Desde* is sometimes used in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America simply to emphasize the moment at which something happened: *Desde el martes llegó mi hermano* 'My brother arrived on Tuesday (already)'.⁴

32.4 Translating 'ago'

Hace/hacia with a preterite or pluperfect (or, in Spain, a perfect of recency – see 14.9.3) is the usual formula:

<i>Le/Lo vi hace años</i>	I saw him years ago
<i>Lo había visto hacía años</i>	I'd seen him years ago/before then
<i>La he visto</i> (Lat. Am. <i>La vi</i>) <i>hace un momento</i> (European Spanish perfect of recency)	I saw her a moment ago

Atrás is sometimes used in literary styles:

<i>Lo repararon tiempo atrás</i>	They mended it/fixed it some time ago
<i>Le/Lo conocí días atrás</i>	I met him some days ago

32.5 'In n days/weeks', etc.

Foreign students often misuse *dentro de* when translating the English 'in'. *Dentro de* can only refer to the future or the future in the past. One cannot say **Lo hice dentro de un año* 'I did it in one year' (i.e. *Lo hice en un año*).

—¿Cuándo empieza? — <i>Dentro de tres días</i>	'When does it start?' 'In three days' time'
<i>Lo haré dentro de un momento</i>	I'll do it in a moment
<i>Me dijo que dentro de un año estaríamos casados</i>	She/He told me that in a year's time we would be married
<i>de hoy en ocho días</i>	in eight days' time
<i>Me faltan/quedan tres días para irme</i>	I'm going in three days' time

Notes

(i) Use of *en* to mean *dentro de* is common in Latin America, much less common in Spain: *No te preocupes, vuelvo en un rato* (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue) 'Don't worry, I'll be back in a minute'. Seco (1992), 170, says that this use of *en* for *dentro de* is an Anglicism. In the following correct sentence it does not mean *dentro de* but 'in the space of': *Lo haré en un momento* 'It'll only take me a moment to do it'.

(ii) *En* can be like the English 'in' in sentences like 'I've not been there in/for years':

⁴ Example from J.M. Lope Blanch (1991), 18.

Sabe usted que no nos hemos visto en doce años (C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue) 'You know that we haven't seen one another in/for twelve years'.

32.6 'Again'

There are numerous ways of translating 'again':

(a) *Volver a . . .*

This is probably the most usual construction before a verb:

<i>Han vuelto a hacerlo</i>	They've done it again
<i>Cuando cerró la puerta volví a llorar</i> (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)	When he shut the door, I started crying again
<i>Como me vuelvo a hablar de esa manera . . .</i> (this use of <i>como</i> is discussed at 25.8.2)	If you talk to me like that again . . .

(b) *Otra vez.*

This also translates 'again':

<i>Hazlo otra vez/Vuelve a hacerlo/Hazlo de nuevo</i>	Do it again
<i>No te lo digo otra vez/No te lo vuelvo a decir/No vuelvo a decírtelo</i>	I won't tell you again
<i>Otra vez no te lo digo</i>	Another time I won't tell you/The next time I won't tell you

(c) *De nuevo* is more literary than *otra vez*.

<i>De nuevo volvieron las suspicacias y los celos</i>	Once again suspicion and distrust returned
---	--

32.7 Tardar

Tardar, as well as meaning 'to be late' (*No tardes* 'Don't be late') may translate 'to take' in expressions of time:

<i>Tardó un año en escribirnos</i>	He took a year to write to us/He didn't write to us for a year
<i>Tardará casi tres horas en acabarlo</i>	He'll take nearly three hours to do it
<i>Se tarda media hora andando</i>	It takes an hour to walk it

Note

Llevar may also be used in certain expressions: *Eso te llevará horas* 'That'll take you hours', *Me llevó días* 'It took me days'; but *El viaje duró varias horas* 'The journey took several hours'.

32.8 'Still'

Todavía and *aún* are discussed at 31.7.3.

A very frequent construction is *continuar* or *seguir* followed by the gerund (**continuar a hacer algo*, 'to continue to do something', French *continuer à faire quelquechose*, is not Spanish).

Seguir is used before adjectives and participles, i.e. one says *Sigue enfermo* 'He's still ill' rather than *Continúa enfermo*.

<i>Te has dado cuenta de que sigues llevando puesta la chaqueta del pijama</i> (J-M. Merino, Spain, dialogue)	You've realized that you've still got your pyjama/(US) 'pajama' jacket on
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Continuaban/Seguían viéndose
Pero ella sigue soltera (C. Fuentes,
 Mexico, dialogue)

They went on seeing one another
 But she's still unmarried

32.9 Dates

Months are not written with a capital letter in Spanish.

The usual format is: *15 de mayo de 1999 = quince de mayo de mil novecientos noventa y nueve, 2 (dos) de mayo de 2002, 1 de abril de 1998*, the latter pronounced *primero de abril* or *uno de abril*. Some purists censure the use of *uno* but it is in general use, at least in Spain; Seco (1992), 196, has nothing against it.

The format of dates in Spain is the same as in Britain: dd-mm-yy. In Latin America there is a tendency to adopt the format mm-dd-yy when writing dates in full: *junio 17 de 1997, Spain 17 de junio de 1999*.

When dates are written in numbers, the European format is used: Spain 3-IV-1998/3-4-1998, Britain 3-4-(19)98, US 4-3-(19)98 = '3 April 1998'.

Typists often use a point after the thousands when writing years, 1.999, but this is condemned by *El País* and by Seco (1992), 197.

32.10 Omission of preposition before certain expressions of time

The preposition is omitted before some words and expressions. These are:

(a) Days of the week

Nos vemos el lunes/el viernes

We're meeting on Monday/Friday

(b) With a demonstrative + *añodía/mañana/tarde/noche/vez*:

Aquel día/año llovió mucho
Le/Lo vi esta mañana

It rained a lot that day/year
 I saw him this morning

In familiar Latin-American Spanish the preposition may also be omitted before some other words, as in *la ocasión que te vi* (Spain . . . *en que*) 'the occasion I saw you', . . . *cuando la mañana siguiente me anunció que . . .* (A. Mastretta, Mexico, Spain *a la mañana*) ' . . . when the following morning he announced to me that . . . '.

33

Conjunctions

This chapter discusses the following words:

<i>pero, sino, mas</i>	but	33.1
<i>o/u</i>	or	33.2
<i>y/e</i>	and	33.3
<i>que, de que</i>	that	33.4
<i>porque, pues, como</i>	and other words meaning 'because', 'since . . .'	33.5.1
<i>ya que, puesto que, como</i>	and other words meaning 'since'/'seeing that'	33.5.2
<i>aunque, y eso que</i>	and other words meaning 'although'	33.6
<i>con tal de que, a menos que</i>	and other expressions of condition and exception	33.7
words indicating purpose		33.8
<i>de modo/manera que</i>	and other words expressing result	33.9

A large number of Spanish subordinating conjunctions, e.g. *cuando, sin que, después de que*, are associated with the subjunctive and are discussed in Chapter 16. They are merely noted in the appropriate section of this chapter.

33.1 *Pero, sino, mas*

All of these translate 'but'. *Mas* (no accent) is virtually extinct, but it is occasionally found in flowery written language and in the bad Spanish of students influenced by French or Portuguese.

The distinction between *pero* and *sino* is crucial:

(a) *Sino* is used in statements of the sort 'not A but B . . .'. It is almost always preceded by a negative statement and is very common in the construction *no sólo/solo . . . sino (que) . . .* 'not only . . . but . . .'. Before a verb phrase *sino que* must be used. Examples:

No quiero pan, sino vino
no tú, sino él
no este/éste, sino ese/ése
. . . *mientras no ponía, sino que arrojaba*
las tazas sobre la bandeja (C. Rico-Godoy,
Spain)
Yo no dije que fuera mentira, sino que no lo
creía

I don't want bread, but wine
not you, but him
not this one, but that
. . . while she was not so much putting
as flinging the cups on the tray
I didn't say it was a lie, but that I didn't
believe it

(b) *Pero* is not possible in any of the above examples. *Pero* translates the English word 'but' in all other cases:

Habla francés, pero mal

He speaks French, but badly

No van a misa todos los días, pero rezan en sus cuartos

They don't go to Mass every day, but they do pray in their rooms

Pero ¿es posible?

But can it (really) be possible?

Notes

(i) *Sino* may sometimes be translated as 'except': *¿Qué puedo decir sino que lo siento?* 'What can I say but/except that I'm sorry?' . . . *ni él pudo entenderlo sino como un milagro del amor* (G. García Márquez, Colombia) 'even he couldn't understand it except as a miracle of love'.

(ii) *Sino* must not be confused (as it sometimes is in old texts) with *si no* 'if not'.

(iii) *No* . . . *sino* may translate 'only': *Yo no podía sino dar gracias a Dios* . . . 'I could only thank God', *No pensaba sino en ella/No pensaba más que en ella* 'He thought only of her', *El pueblo mexicano . . . no cree ya sino en la Virgen de Guadalupe y en la Lotería Nacional* (O. Paz, Mexico) 'The Mexican people . . . now believe in nothing but the Virgin of Guadalupe and the National Lottery'.

33.2 O

'Or'. It is written and pronounced *u* before a word beginning with *o* or *ho*: *hombres o mujeres* 'men or women', but *mujeres u hombres* 'women or men'. Spoken language often neglects to use *u*, and *o* is also sometimes retained if it is the first word in a sentence.

O . . . o translates 'either . . . or': *O lo sabe o no lo sabe* 'Either he knows it or he doesn't', *Os digo que u os apartáis, u os araña* (dialogue in a popular novel, Spain; *o os* . . . is more likely in spontaneous speech) 'I'm telling you, either you get out of my way, or I'll scratch you'.

Note

O should be written with an accent when it appears alongside a number to avoid confusion with zero: *6 ó 5* '6 or 5'. However, *El País* prints *6 o 5* on the grounds that no confusion is likely with *605*.

33.3 Y

'And'; used much like its English equivalent. It is written and pronounced *e* before a word beginning with a pure *i* sound, e.g. *Miguel e Ignacio, padre e hijos*, but not before words beginning with a *y* sound – *carbón y hierro* 'coal and iron' – and not when it means 'what about . . .?': *¿Y Ignacio?* 'What about Ignacio?'. Substitution of *e* for *y* is not always made in spontaneous speech.

The use of *y* differs from the English 'and' in a few other respects:

(a) It is occasionally translatable as 'after' in sentences like:

Transcurrieron días y días sin tener más noticias de lo ocurrido¹

Day after day passed without any further news being heard of what had happened (lit. 'without having news of')

¹ Example from Francisco Marsá (1986), 152. This sentence is a good example of a passive infinitive. See 18.5.

(b) As mentioned earlier, it often means 'what about. . .?':

¿Y la democracia?

¿Y qué?

¿Y el perro?

What about democracy?

So what?/Who cares?

What about the dog?

33.4 Que

Que is an overworked word: it has at least four separate uses in Spanish:

(a) As a relative pronoun: *la mujer que vi* 'the woman that/whom I saw', *el año en que nació* 'the year I was born in'. This use is discussed in Chapter 35;

(b) *Qué* with an accent means 'what' and is best thought of as an entirely different word; it is discussed at 24.4;

(c) *Que* may mean 'than' in comparisons; see Chapter 5;

(d) As a subordinating conjunction; see the next section.

33.4.1 Que as a subordinating conjunction

Que introduces clauses in the same way as the English conjunction 'that'. It differs from the latter in that it cannot be omitted (see 33.4.6 for rare exceptions):

Dice que viene

Cree que no ha pagado

Parece que va a llover

He says (that) he's coming

He thinks (that) he hasn't paid

It seems (that) it's going to rain

However, the absence of a personal infinitive construction in Spanish makes this use of *que* much more common than the English 'that': *Quiero que vengas* 'I want you **to come**', *Te aconsejo que no lo hagas* 'I advise you not **to do** it', *Les pidió que no firmasen* 'He asked them not **to sign**'. Statements followed by *que* that require the subjunctive, for example *quiero que . . .* 'I want . . .', *es necesario que . . .* 'it's necessary that . . .', are discussed in Chapter 16.

33.4.2 De before que

In certain circumstances a subordinate clause must be introduced by *de que*. This is necessary:

(a) After noun phrases

This happens when *que* is a conjunction and not a relative pronoun. English does not clearly differentiate between the relative pronoun 'that' and the subordinating conjunction 'that': the phrase 'the idea **that** he liked . . .' is therefore ambiguous out of context. If 'that' can be replaced by 'which', *que* alone is possible in the Spanish translation. Compare:

the idea that/which he liked

The idea that he likes mustard is absurd ('that' not replaceable by 'which')

La idea que le gustaba . . . (relative pronoun; *de que* impossible)

La idea de que le gusta la mostaza es absurda (subordinating conjunction)

Further examples:

Se dio cuenta de que ya no llovía
Cuando yo era chico y me desesperaba ante
la idea de que mi madre debía morirse un
día . . . (E. Sabato, Argentina)
Tenía miedo de que . . .

He realized that it was no longer raining
When I was a little boy and I despaired
at the idea that my mother would have to
die one day . . .
He was afraid that . . .

<i>Soy partidario de que . . .</i>	I'm in favour of . . .
<i>el argumento de que . . .</i>	the argument that . . .
<i>la creencia de que . . .</i>	the belief that . . .
<i>la causa de que no llegara a tiempo</i>	the cause of his not arriving on time

(b) After a number of common verbs that require the preposition *de*

<i>Me acuerdo de que . . .</i>	I remember that . . .
<i>Me olvidaba de que . . .</i>	I was forgetting that . . .
<i>Estoy convencido de que . . .</i>	I'm convinced that . . .

and similarly after a number of verbs denoting mental or emotional states such as *aburrirse de que . . .* 'to be bored that . . .'. For a selection of these verbs see 16.6.1, list B.

(c) After certain adjectives and adverbial phrases that are normally followed by *de*

<i>Estoy seguro de que . . .</i>	I'm sure that . . .
<i>Estamos contentos de que . . .</i>	We're pleased that . . .
<i>Estoy cansado/harto de que . . .</i>	I'm tired/fed up with . . .
<i>Soy consciente de que . . .</i>	I'm aware that . . .
<i>Estoy hasta la coronilla de que . . .</i>	I'm sick to death with . . .

(d) After subordinators that include *de*

<i>antes de que llegase</i>	before he arrived
<i>después de que se fueron</i>	after they went
<i>a condición de que . . .</i>	on condition that . . .
<i>a cambio de que . . .</i>	in exchange for . . .
etc.	

Notes

(i) There is a colloquial tendency, much stronger in Latin America than in Spain, to drop the *de* in the more common of these constructions: *Wenceslao se había dado cuenta que la maniobra de Juvenal era extraviar a sus primos* (J. Donoso, Chile) 'Wenceslao had realized that Juvenal's manoeuvre was (designed) to lead his cousins astray', . . . *pero estoy segura que es lo que haces . . .* (L. Goytisolo, Spain, dialogue) 'but I'm sure that that is what you're doing', *para que te convenzas que la dignidad no se come . . .* (G. García Márquez, Colombia, dialogue) 'to convince you (lit. so you convince yourself) that one can't eat dignity . . .'. In general, omission of *de* in such cases may be rejected as substandard by Peninsular speakers.

(ii) *Antes que* 'before' seems to be in more or less free variation with *antes de que* everywhere, cf. *Venda ese gallo antes que sea demasiado tarde* (G. García Márquez, Colombia, dialogue) 'Sell that cockerel before it's too late', *Lo conozco desde antes que tú nacieras* (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, dialogue) 'I've known him since before you were born', *Antes que te cases, mira lo que haces* (Spanish proverb) 'Before you marry, look at what you're doing'. Peninsular informants found *antes que* acceptable in these sentences but much less common than *antes de que*.

33.4.3 Dequeísmo

There is a growing tendency on both continents to insert a redundant *de* after verbs denoting opinions or states of mind, e.g. *decir* 'say', *afirmar* 'claim', *creer* 'believe', *sostener* 'maintain', *negar* 'deny', *pensar* 'think', *confesar* 'confess', *argüir* 'argue', etc. Examples (a question mark denotes sentences that are considered sub-standard):

?Dice <i>de que</i> no viene (for <i>Dice que no viene</i>)	He says he's not coming
?Creo <i>de que</i> no es verdad (for <i>Creo que no es verdad</i>)	I think it's not true

This use of *de que* for *que* is vehemently rejected by educated speakers everywhere and should be avoided at all costs. It is especially frequent in some regions, notoriously Peru, where it is constantly heard on radio and TV.

Notes

(i) *Hablar de que* is correctly used colloquially for 'to talk about . . .' in such sentences as *Habló de que Miguel estaba enfermo* 'He talked about Miguel being ill'.

(ii) *Dudar de que* is a legitimate variant of *dudar que* 'to doubt': *Nadie dudó (de) que dijera la verdad*² 'No one doubted that he told the truth'.

(iii) The construction with *informar* is *informar a alguien de algo* 'to inform someone of something', so *Les informó de que no era cierto* is correct for 'He informed them it was not true'. However, *informar que* is also commonly heard.

33.4.4 Que at the head of a phrase

Que may appear at the head of a sentence, especially in speech. Its main functions are:

(a) To reinforce the idea that what follows expresses something expected, something repeated or something that is being insisted on. In this case a verb like *decir* or *preguntar* may have been omitted:

<i>¿Que cómo se llama mi película?</i>	(Did you ask) what's my film called?
<i>¿Que si me gustó?</i>	(Did you ask me) did I like it?
<i>Que no quiero verla</i>	(I said that) I don't want to see her/it
<i>Oye, que aquí pone que no hay que abrirlo</i>	Listen, it says here that it mustn't be opened
<i>¡Que sí! ¡Que no!</i>	Yes! No! (impatient repetition)

(b) As a colloquial subordinator of cause. It is often inserted to connect one idea to another where English uses a pause represented in writing by a dash:

<i>¡Deprisa! ¡Deprisa! ¡Que se va!</i>	Hurry! Hurry! It's going! (e.g. the train)
<i>Habla más bajo, que es mi jefe</i>	Talk softer – (s)he's my boss
<i>¿Dónde está mi marido que lo degüello?!</i>	Where's my husband – I'm going to slaughter him!
<i>¡Socorro! ¡Que me ahogo!</i>	Help! I'm drowning!
<i>No me des la lata con lo que dicen los lectores, que tengo cosas más importantes de que ocuparme</i> (C. Rico-Godoy in <i>Cambio16</i> , Spain)	Don't pester me with what the readers are saying – I've more important things to bother about

(c) Colloquially, to show that the truth has dawned after some doubt:

<i>¡Ah! Que usted es el fontanero</i> (Lat. Am. plomero)	Ah – so you're the plumber then
<i>Que tú eres entonces el que lo hizo</i>	So you're the one who did it then
<i>¿Que no quieres ir conmigo?</i>	You mean you don't want to go with me?

(d) To translate 'that' in colloquial sentences meaning 'It was so . . . that . . .'. In these sentences some word like *tanto* or *tan* has been deleted:

<i>Tengo un sueño que no veo</i>	I'm so tired I could drop (lit. 'that I can't see')
<i>Estaba la habitación que no cabía un alfiler</i>	The room was so crowded that a pin wouldn't fit/you couldn't get a pin in it

² Example from Francisco Marsá (1986), 155.

(e) With the subjunctive in commands, exhortations and wishes, e.g. *Que venga en seguida* 'Tell him to come/Have him come immediately'. See 17.6 for details.

(f) To mean 'the fact that', in which case it is likely to take the subjunctive. See 16.10.1 for further discussion.

33.4.5 *Que* in indirect questions

Decir que may mean 'to ask'. *Que* is also used optionally after *preguntar* 'to ask':

—¿Sabes lo que me dijo este animal de bellota? —Te dijo *que* si estaba la cena lista (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain, dialogue complaining about husbands)
Yo me pregunto (*que*) dónde estará ella estudiando

'Do you know what this pig (lit. 'acorn animal') said to/asked me?' 'He asked you if dinner/supper was ready'

I wonder where she's studying

33.4.6 Omission of conjunction *que*

Que is occasionally omitted, but much less so than the English 'that':

(a) If the following verb is in the subjunctive, and especially with the verb *rogar que* 'to request'. This construction is practically confined to business letters and other official language; it is also found in substandard language:

Les agradeceríamos (que) comunicasen a su sucursal de Sevilla . . .
Les ruego envíen más información sobre la máquina de escribir ES 3 (advertisement in *Cambio16*, Spain)
No importa le tilden de bufón (Popular press, Spain; substandard for *no importa que le tilden . . .*)

We would be obliged if you would inform your Seville branch . . .
Please send more information about the ES 3 typewriter

It doesn't matter if they dub him a clown

Such omission is best avoided by the foreign student.

(b) In relative clauses introduced by *que* so as to avoid too many *ques*. This is probably confined to written language ('#' marks the point of omission):

Desde este punto de vista, que pienso # comparten muchos españoles . . .
Me contestó con una serie de argumentos que supongo # están de moda hoy día

From this point of view, which I think many Spaniards share . . .
She replied with a series of arguments which I suppose are fashionable nowadays

33.4.7 Replacement of subordinating *que* by an infinitive

For a discussion of sentences like *Dice estar enferma* 'She says she's ill' (for *Dice que está enferma*) see 18.2.2.

33.4.8 Miscellaneous examples of *que*

The bracket indicates that the *que* is optional:

Qué bien (que) lo hemos pasado (the redundant *que* sounds uneducated)
. . . y él habla *que* habla (colloquial)
Yo venga a pedirle el divorcio y él que no (*venga a* is a colloquial Peninsular form suggesting constant repetition)

What a nice time we've had

and he kept talking away . . .

I kept on asking him for a divorce and he wouldn't have it/kept saying no

Lucho por conseguir comprensión, (que) no amor
Le pregunté (que) qué hacía allí
¡Cuidado que sois pesados!

I'm struggling to get understanding, not love
 I asked him what he was doing there
 Heavens, are you a nuisance!

33.5 Causal conjunctions

The most common are:

porque
como
pues
ya que
puesto que
en vista de que

because
 since, as
 for (= 'because')
 since
 since
 in view of the fact that

33.5.1 Porque

Porque means 'because'; *por qué*, spelt and pronounced differently, means 'why'. The noun *el porqué* means 'the reason why'.

Porque may occasionally require the subjunctive. See 16.12.3b.

The difference between *porque* 'because' and *por qué* 'why' is crucial: *No sabe, porque es tan ignorante* 'He doesn't know because he's so ignorant', *No sabe por qué es tan ignorante* 'He doesn't know **why** he's so ignorant'.

Notes

(i) *Porque* may also be found as an optional alternative to *para que* after those words which allow *por*, e.g. *esforzarse por* 'to make an effort to . . .' (see the section on *por* and *para* 34.14). For *por qué* and *para qué* 'why', see 24.10.

(ii) *Por* is intimately associated with the idea of cause, e.g. *Te lo mereces, por tonto* 'Serves you right for being stupid', *Se perdieron por no haber comprado un mapa* 'They got lost as a result of not having bought a map'. See 34.14.4 for more examples.

(iii) *Porque* and *por qué* can never be used to translate 'that's why' or 'that's the reason why'; see 36.2.4.

33.5.2 Como, ya que, puesto que, que, en vista de que

All of these may translate 'since'. *Que* is discussed under 33.4.

Puesto/Ya que quieres que me vaya, me voy
La reunión se aplazó en vista de que no vino casi nadie

Since you want me to go, I'm leaving
 The meeting was postponed in view of the fact that hardly anybody turned up

Care is required with the word *como* when it is used to mean 'since'/'because'. When used thus it can appear only at the head of the phrase it refers to. **Yo no comía como no tenía apetito* is not Spanish, but *Como no tenía apetito, yo no comía* 'As I had no appetite, I didn't eat' is correct:

Como/Ya que quieres que me vaya me voy

Since you want me to go, I'm going

Compare *No lo hice como me dijiste* 'I didn't do it the way you told me to', and *No lo hice, como me lo dijiste* (example from *Libro de estilo de El País*) 'I didn't do it, just as you told me' (i.e. 'because you told me not to'). Further examples:

Es de peor educación todavía insinuar que, como soy una mujer, se supone que no soy nadie (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain, dialogue)
Luego, como veía que no llegaban . . .

It's even more ill-mannered to hint that, since I'm a woman, it's assumed that I'm nobody
 Then, since he could see that they weren't coming . . .

Pero, como yo no sabía qué hacer . . .

But since I didn't know what to do . . .

Note

Como with the subjunctive translates 'if' in conditional sentences; see 25.8.2.

33.5.3 Pues

Pues has numerous uses, but its basic function is probably to show that what follows is inspired by something said just before, or that the speaker has reflected a moment before continuing.

(a) *Pues* meaning 'because'

Pues should be employed very sparingly as a causal conjunction meaning 'because': Gili y Gaya (1972), 15, caustically observes that 'discovery of causal *pues* as a way of adding a certain literary flourish to one's style is typical of writing between childhood and adolescence . . . This phase does not usually last long'.

Pues may be an elegant written variation on *porque* in the hands of a good stylist, just as 'for' is an occasional flowery variant for 'because' in English ('It cannot be done, **for** there is no money'); but non-natives should probably stick to *porque*, *ya que* or *puesto que*: *La voz no se sabe si es femenina o de hombre, pues es aguda, verdaderamente penetrante* (J.-M. Arguedas, Peru) 'You can't tell whether the voice is a woman's or a man's, for it is high-pitched, truly piercing'.

(b) 'In that case . . .'

—*No queremos comer ahora. —Pues, cuando ustedes quieran . . . (or entonces/en ese caso)*

'We don't want to eat now.' 'In that case, when you like . . .'

—*No quiero estar aquí. —Pues vete*

'I don't want to be here.' 'Go away then'

(c) Like the English 'well', it may down-tone an answer to a question, adding a modest or tentative note or perhaps showing that the speaker has reflected a moment before answering:

—*¿En qué situación se encuentran las negociaciones entre los dos gobiernos?*

'What is the state of the negotiations between the two governments?'

—*Pues, el hecho es que no hay negociaciones . . . (interview, Cambio16, Spain)*

'Well, the fact is there are no negotiations . . .'

—*¿Quiénes estaban? —Pues . . . Manuel, Antonio, Mariluz . . .*

'Who was there?' 'Er . . . Manuel, Antonio, Mariluz . . .'

(d) It may add emphasis or a note of contradiction:

—*Yo creía que estaba enfermo. —Pues no No, si ya me figuro dónde está. ¡Pues me va a oír! (A. Buero Vallejo, Spain, dialogue)*

'I thought he was ill.' 'Well he isn't No, I can well imagine where she is. Well, she's going to hear what I've got to say!'

Notes

(i) In some parts of Latin America and Northern Spain, conversation is sprinkled with *pues*: *oye pues, vámonos pues*, etc.

(ii) Students of French should not confuse *pues* with *puis* which is translated as *después*, *entonces* and *luego*.

33.6 Concession

33.6.1 Phrases that introduce concessions ('although', etc.)

The main ways of introducing a concession are as follows (asterisked forms are typical of literary language):

<i>aunque/bien que/y eso que/así/aun cuando</i>	although/even though/even in the event that
<i>a pesar de que/pese a que*/por más que/a despecho de que*</i>	despite the fact that
<i>por mucho que</i>	however much

All of these, except *y eso que*, may appear with the subjunctive and are discussed at 16.12.8. *Por mucho que* is discussed at 16.13.2.

33.6.2 *Y eso que*

Y eso que is stylistically informal and does not take the subjunctive. It can only refer to events that are realities, i.e. it means 'despite the fact that': *No la reconocí, y eso que la había visto dos días antes* 'I didn't recognise her although/despite the fact that I'd seen her two days before':

<i>. . . y eso que lo había visto saltar hasta los zapatos</i> (J. Cortázar, Argentina, dialogue)	. . . even though I'd seen it bounce down to my shoes
<i>. . . y eso que devolvió de forma increíble varias bolas</i> (<i>El País</i>)	. . . despite the fact that he made some incredible returns (in tennis)

33.7 Condition and exception

(a) The main conjunctions of condition are (all require the subjunctive and are discussed under 16.12.7a):

<i>con tal (de) que</i>	as long as/provided that
<i>a condición de que</i>	on condition that
<i>bajo (la) condición de que</i>	under the condition that
<i>siempre que</i>	as long as
<i>siempre y cuando</i>	provided always that
<i>mientras (no)</i>	as long as
<i>como</i>	as long as

(b) Conjunctions of exception are (all mean 'unless' and are discussed at 16.12.7b):

<i>a menos que</i>	<i>excepto que/salvo que</i>
<i>a no ser que</i>	<i>como no . . .</i>
<i>fuera de que</i>	<i>si no</i> (if not)

33.8 Subordinating conjunctions of purpose and aim

The most common are:

<i>'in order that'</i>	<i>'so that'</i>
<i>para que</i>	<i>de manera que*</i>
<i>porque</i>	<i>de modo que*</i>
<i>a que</i>	<i>de forma que*</i>
<i>a fin de que</i>	<i>'lest'</i>
<i>con el objeto de que</i>	<i>no sea/fuera/fuese que</i>

All conjunctions of purpose require the subjunctive and are discussed under 16.12.2. Those that have asterisks may also indicate result and are then followed by the indicative. See 16.12.4 for discussion.

33.9 Subordinating conjunctions of result

Subordinators that express manner can denote either a result or an aim. In the latter case they take the subjunctive. The most common are:

de modo que/de manera que/de forma que/así que so that (i.e. 'in such a way that')
conque . . . so . . .

These are discussed under 16.12.4, but it should be noted that the phrases *de tal modo que*, *de tal manera que*, *de tal forma que* can only express result, not purpose:

Gritó de tal modo/manera/forma que todos los vecinos se asomaron a la ventana He shouted in such a way that all the neighbours leaned out of their windows

33.10 Subordinating conjunctions of time

These include such words and phrases as:

<i>a la vez que</i>	at the same time as
<i>a partir del momento en que</i>	from the moment that
<i>a poco de que</i>	shortly after
<i>al mismo tiempo</i>	at the same time as
<i>al poco rato de que</i>	shortly after
<i>antes de que</i>	before
<i>apenas</i>	scarcely
<i>así que</i>	as soon as
<i>cada vez que</i>	every time that
<i>cuando</i>	when
<i>después de que</i>	after
<i>en cuanto</i>	as soon as
<i>en tanto que</i>	as long as
<i>hasta que</i>	until
<i>mientras</i>	while/as long as
<i>nada más que</i>	as soon as
<i>no bien que</i>	scarcely
<i>siempre que</i>	whenever/as long as
<i>tan pronto como</i>	as soon as
<i>una vez que</i>	once/as soon as

All subordinators of time require the subjunctive in certain circumstances (*antes de que* always take the subjunctive). They are discussed at 16.12.6.

For further remarks on *cuando* see 24.8.

34

Prepositions

The following prepositions are discussed in this chapter:

<i>a</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>hacia</i>	<i>según</i>
<i>ante</i>	<i>desde</i>	<i>hasta</i>	<i>sin</i>
<i>bajo</i>	<i>durante</i>	<i>mediante</i>	<i>sobre</i>
<i>con</i>	<i>en</i>	<i>para</i>	<i>tras</i>
<i>contra</i>	<i>entre</i>	<i>por</i>	

Many of these can be combined with other words to form prepositional phrases such as *debajo de* 'underneath', *frente a* 'opposite', *a razón de* 'at the rate of', etc. A list of these phrases is included at 34.19.

Prepositional usage is more subject than other areas of syntax to the vagaries of linguistic change, and the whole subject is plagued with quibbles and doubts. In this chapter special emphasis is given to aspects of Spanish prepositional usage that are likely to be unfamiliar to English-speakers.

34.1 A

This very common preposition has many uses. Apart from the problems they have with Personal *a*, discussed in Chapter 22, English speakers tend to misuse it when translating phrases like 'at the dentist's', 'at Cambridge', 'at the station'. See (d) for discussion.

(a) Motion, 'to', 'at', 'up', 'down', etc.

Almost any verb of motion is likely to be followed by *a*. As a result its meanings include 'on', 'into', 'onto', 'down', 'up', as well as 'to' and 'at'.

<i>Por fin llegaron a Managua</i>	They finally got to Managua
<i>Fui a/para que me diera hora</i>	I went to make an appointment
<i>Bajó al sótano</i>	He went down to the basement
<i>Se acercó al buzón</i>	He approached the letter box
<i>Me subí al coche/al tren</i>	I got into the car/on the train
<i>Lanzaban piedras al/contra las ventanas</i>	They were throwing stones at the windows
<i>Arrojó la espada al aire</i>	He hurled the sword into the air
<i>Entró a/para saludarnos</i>	He came in to say hello to us
<i>Ha venido a/para/por hablar con usted</i>	He's come to talk to you
<i>Lo pegó al/en el sobre</i>	She stuck it on the envelope
<i>Cuélgaselo al cuello</i>	Hang it round his neck
(cf. <i>Cuélgalo en la pared</i>)	Hang it on the wall)

Cayó al suelo/al mar
Se tiró al vacío
una expedición a Marte
salida a la calle
tiro al blanco

It fell to the ground/into the sea
 He threw himself into the void
 an expedition to Mars
 way out to the street
 target shooting

Notes

(i) *A* is omitted after verbs of motion before *aquí, acá, ahí, allí, allá*: *Ven aquí/acá* (*Ven para acá*) 'Come here', *Allá voy/Voy para allá* 'I'm going there'.

(ii) Cf. Spain *entrar en el cuarto*, Latin America *entrar al cuarto* 'to enter the room', although *entrar a* is also heard in Spain. The noun takes *a*: *entrada a la galería* 'entrance to the gallery'. Spain also prefers *en* with *penetrar* 'penetrate', *ingresar* 'to join' (club, etc.), *introducir* 'to insert', but the use of *a* is widespread in Latin America, cf. *Ingresó como adepto laico a la orden* (J.L. Borges) 'He entered (historic present) the order as a lay follower'.

(iii) *Para* is also found colloquially after *ir*: *Voy para Lugo* 'I'm heading for Lugo'.

(b) Direction, 'at'

Mira al techo y no te entrará agua en los ojos Look at the ceiling and you won't get water in your eyes

(c) After verbs of giving, sending, informing, etc.

Dáselo a papá Give it to father
Le envió cien dólares a su hijo He sent his son \$100
Comunicaremos los datos a los aseguradores We shall inform the insurers of the details

Note

For the use of the redundant pronoun in the first two of these examples see 11.16.2.

(d) Place (static)

The use of *a* to indicate 'at' or 'in' a place is very limited in Spanish. English-speakers – particularly those who know French, German or Italian – must avoid the use of *a* in sentences like *Estoy haciendo mis estudios en Cambridge* 'I'm studying at Cambridge', *Te esperaré en la estación* 'I'll wait for you at the station' (*à la gare, am Bahnhof*, etc.), *Vive en Londres* = *Il habite à Londres*, etc. Apart from set phrases like *al lado de* 'at the side of', *a la luz de* 'in the light of', *a* can only be used with a few nouns like *vuelta*, 'turn', *salida* 'exit', *entrada* 'entrance' which denote actions or moments in time rather than places. *Os esperaré a la salida* is best thought of as 'I'll wait for you on the way out' rather than 'at the exit', which is *en la salida*.

In phrases like *Estaba asomado a la ventana* 'He was leaning in/out of the window' *asomar* is a verb of motion: *Estaba en la ventana* is, however, safer than *Estaba a la ventana* 'He was at the window'. The sentence *Fue a estudiar a París* is only a variant of *Fue a París a estudiar* 'He went to Paris to study'; it does not mean 'He went to study at Paris' – . . . *en París*.

A is used to translate 'at' in a number of situations involving close proximity to an object, e.g. *a la barra* 'at the bar', *a la mesa* 'at table' (i.e. 'at mealtime'); but note *Se sienta en una mesa de la calle y pide una cerveza* (J. Cortázar, Argentina) 'He sits down at a table in the street and asks for a beer':

Vivo a la vuelta I live round the corner
a orillas del mar on the sea shore
Oí pasos a mi espalda I heard footsteps at my back
a mi lado (cf. *de mi lado*, 'on my side')

*Se pasa horas sentado al ordenador
Se arrodilló a los pies de la Virgen
Está con el agua al cuello*

*a la izquierda/derecha de
a lo lejos/en la distancia
Se sentaron al sol/a la luz/al calor del fuego/
a la sombral/a al amparo de un roble*

He spends hours sitting at the computer
He knelt at the feet of the Virgin
He's up to his neck (in troubles: *hasta*
implies real water)
to the left/right of
in the distance
They sat in the sun/light/warmth of the
fire/shade/in the shelter of an oak

Compare:

*Espérame en la parada del autobús
Estaba parado en un semáforo
Mario está en el banco
Los niños están en el colegio
(cf. *Mi hijo todavía no va al colegio*)*

La vi en la puerta de la iglesia

Wait for me at the bus stop
He was waiting at a traffic light
Mario is at/in the bank
The children are in/at school
My son isn't at school yet (i.e. doesn't go
yet)
I saw her at the church door

Notes

(i) *A la puerta* is good Spanish, but we found that some American informants preferred *en* – but cf. *Morelli habla del napolitano que se pasó años sentado a la puerta de su casa . . .* (J. Cortázar, Argentina) 'Morelli speaks of the Neapolitan who spent years sitting at the door of his house . . .'.
(ii) Spanish thus has no prepositions that can differentiate 'He's at the hospital' and 'He's in (the) hospital': verbs are used instead – *Ha ido al hospital* and *Está en el hospital*.

(e) Manner (adverbial phrases of manner with *a* are numerous)

*a piela mano/a lápiz
a golpes/a tiros/a patadas/a gritos*

*un documento escrito a máquina
El servicio es a voluntad del cliente*

*Las patatas están a punto
Le cortaron el pelo al rape
Estoy a dieta
a oscuras/a la luz del día
La carpa se puede asar a la parrilla*

on foot/by hand/in pencil
with blows/by shooting/with kicks/by
shouting
a typed document
Service charge at the customer's
discretion
The potatoes are done
They cropped his hair short
I'm on a diet
in the dark/by daylight
Carp may be grilled

Note

The curious construction with *a* found in the phrase *Sois dos a ganar* 'There are two of you earning' may perhaps be included under this heading.

(f) In certain time phrases

A is particularly common in the construction *al* + infinitive where it means 'on . . .-ing', e.g. *al ver* 'on seeing', *al volverse* 'as he turned round/back':

*a las diez/a medianoche
Se cansa a los cinco minutos
bonos del Estado a diez años
Se casaron a los veinte años (Se casaron con
veinte años)
al día siguiente/al otro día
a la mañana siguiente
al mismo tiempo
a su regreso, a su llegada
Estamos a miércoles/a quince*

at 10 o'clock/at midnight
He gets tired after five minutes
ten-year Government bonds
They got married at the age of twenty

on the following day
the following morning
at the same time
on his return, on his arrival
It's Wednesday/the fifteenth

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tres veces al/por día three times a day
Al amanecer ya se habían marchado They were gone by dawn

Note

Ya deben estar al llegar 'They must be about to arrive'.

(g) To translate 'of' or 'like' after verbs meaning 'smell', 'taste', 'sound', and also after the nouns derived from some of these:

Me suena a cuento chino It sounds like a tall story to me
Esto sabe a pescado This tastes of fish
Había un leve olor a fritura y a crema bronceadora (F. Umbral, Spain) There was a faint smell of frying and suntan cream
La ginebra tiene un sabor a agua de colonia Gin has a taste like Eau de Cologne

(h) 'Fitted with', 'propelled by'

Grammarians reject *a* as a Gallicism in the following constructions, but most of them are normal in everyday language:

olla a presión pressure cooker
caldera al/de gas-oil oil-fired boiler
motor al/de dos tiempos two-stroke motor
un suplemento a color (El País; also *en color*) a colour supplement
un avión al/de dos motores a twin-engined plane
un coche que va al/por metanol a methanol-powered car

Note

The use of *a* to denote an ingredient is occasionally seen in advertising language but it should not be imitated: *crema bronceadora a lanolina* 'sun-tan cream with Lanoline' (better *con lanolina*).

(i) Rate, measure, speed, amount, distance

Se vende a mil pesos el metro It's on sale at 1000 pesos a metre
¿A cómo están las peras? How much are the pears?
Volaba a más de dos mil kilómetros por hora It was flying at more than 2000 km per hour
Compraba tebeos de segunda mano que luego revendía o cambiaba a razón de dos por uno (L. Goytisolo, Spain) He used to buy second-hand comics which he then resold or swapped at the rate of two for one
Está a cinco manzanas (Lat Am *cuadras*) *de aquí* It's five blocks from here
a montones in heaps
frutas al por mayor wholesale fruit
Trabaja a ratos/a veces He works now and again/sometimes

(j) It translates 'from' after a number of words with such meanings as 'steal', 'confiscate', 'buy', and after *oír* 'to hear':

Le robaron una sortija a mi tía They stole a ring from my aunt
Le compró un coche a su vecino He bought a car from his neighbour
La policía se instaló en el piso ocupado al acusado The police moved into the flat/apartment confiscated from the accused
Se lo oí decir a Amparo I heard Amparo say it

and similarly verbs such as *quitar* 'to take away', *sustraer* 'to steal', *confiscar* 'to confiscate', *llevarse* 'to take away', *sacar* 'to take out/remove', etc. However, *recibir* 'to receive', *adquirir* 'to acquire' and *aceptar* 'to accept' take *de*: *aceptar algo de alguien* 'to accept something from someone'.

Note also: *Le encontraron cien pesos a tu primo* 'They found a hundred pesos on your cousin'.

(k) Before certain types of direct object (the so-called 'personal *a*', e.g. *Vi al gitano* 'I saw the gypsy'). See Chapter 22 for detailed discussion.

(l) After verbs meaning 'begin', 'start', 'get ready to . . .'

<i>Rompió a llorar</i>	He burst into tears
<i>Echó a correr</i>	He broke into a run
<i>El cielo empezaba a despejarse</i>	The sky was beginning to clear

and similarly after *comenzar a* 'to begin', *ponerse a* 'to start to', *prepararse a* 'to get ready to', *disponerse a* 'to prepare oneself to'.

(m) After numerous verbs, adjectives and adverbs which must be learned separately, e.g.

<i>Tendían emboscadas a las Ninfas</i> (J.L. Borges, Argentina)	They laid ambushes for the Nymphs
<i>Aspiraba a hacerse médico</i>	He was aiming to become a doctor
<i>Tienes que hacerte al trabajo</i>	You have to get used to the work
<i>Prefiero una vida mediocre a ser héroe</i>	I prefer a mediocre life to being a hero
<i>Te ayudaré a apretar las tuercas</i>	I'll help you tighten the nuts
<i>el viejo argumento de que la religión sirve de freno a los instintos</i>	the old argument that religion serves as a curb on the instincts
<i>jugar al fútbol/al hockey</i>	to play soccer/hockey
<i>tocar algo al acordeón/la guitarra</i>	to play something on the accordion/ guitar
<i>Pudo salvarse agarrándose alde un árbol</i>	He managed to save himself by clinging to a tree
<i>No hay otro igual a él</i>	There is no other equal to him
<i>Tenía el jersey liado en torno a la cintura</i>	He had his jersey tied round his waist
<i>Es muy parecido al de ayer</i>	It's very much like the one from yesterday

For a list of verbs used with the infinitive see 18.2.3.

(n) To link two nouns whenever ambiguity might arise from the use of *de*. Compare *el amor de Dios* = 'God's love' and *el amor a Dios* 'love for God'. Often either preposition is possible.

A is also frequently used to link two nouns when a common verbal phrase exists which also requires *a*, e.g. *Les tiene miedo a los toros* 'He's afraid of bulls', *su miedo a los toros* 'his fear of bulls':

<i>el amor a la patria</i>	love for one's home country
<i>La Casa Blanca confirmó el boicot a los Juegos de Moscú (Cambio16, Spain)</i>	The White House confirmed the boycott of the Moscow Games
<i>el respeto a la autoridad</i>	respect for authority
<i>Lo denunciaron como traidor a/de su clase</i>	They denounced him as a traitor to his class
<i>Insinué algo en el prólogo al libro de Lafaye . . . (O. Paz, Mexico; del possible)</i>	I hinted something in the prologue to Lafaye's book . . .
<i>El culto al sol tendría sus ventajas</i>	Sun-worship would have its advantages
<i>El departamento se encargará de la protección a/de la carretera</i>	The department will take over responsibility for protecting roads
<i>El ataque a la ciudad costó muchas vidas</i>	The attack on the city cost many lives

34.2 Ante

'Before' (i.e. 'in front of') or 'in the presence of', and like its English equivalent it can in literary usage have a spatial meaning, 'facing'/'in front of'; *frente a* or *delante de* are used in ordinary language. *Delante de* makes clear that position rather than 'presence' is implied, cf. *justificarse ante Dios* 'to justify oneself before God', but *arrodillarse delante del/ante la Virgen* 'to kneel before (a statue of) the Virgin'.

Ante is very common in the figurative meaning of 'faced with', 'in the face of'. It must not be confused with the entirely separate word *antes* 'before' (in time):

*El taxi paró antefrente al/delante de la casa
ante este dilema . . .
ante tamaño insulto . . .
Ante tantas posibilidades, no sabía cuál
escoger
Ante todo, quisiera agradecer al
organizador . . .*

The taxi stopped in front of the house
faced with this dilemma . . .
in the face of such an insult . . .
Faced with so many possibilities, he
didn't know which to choose
Above all, I would like to thank the
organizer . . .

Notes

(i) *Frente a* for *ante* in phrases like *frente a estos problemas* seems to be spreading, but for some it still sounds like 'in front of these problems'.

(ii) For details about *delante de*, see 31.6.8.

34.3 Bajo

'Beneath' or 'under'. It may be a literary variant of *debajo de* 'underneath' (discussed at 31.6.6), but in this sense it is spatially less specific (cf. 'under' and 'underneath'): *Se resguardaron bajo un haya* 'They sheltered under/beneath a beech tree' but *Enterró el botín debajo de un roble* 'He buried the loot underneath (i.e. under the roots of) an oak tree'.

Carnicer notes that for those educated speakers who use *bajo*, the difference is that it implies 'a good distance under' or 'under but not close to or touching' – *bajo una masa de nubes* 'under a mass of clouds', *No me quedo ni un minuto más bajo este techo* 'I'm not staying one more minute under this roof' – whereas *debajo de* implies 'underneath and close to whatever is on top': *Hay mucho polvo debajo de la alfombra* 'There's a lot of dust underneath the carpet'.

Thus ?*El perro está bajo la silla* 'The dog's beneath the chair' sounds affected in both languages: *debajo de la silla* 'under(neath) the chair'.

Bajo must be used in the figurative sense of 'under' in phrases like *bajo el gobierno de* 'under the government of', *bajo ciertas condiciones* 'under certain conditions', etc.

*Yo prefiero sentarme bajo el (or al) sol/
bajo las estrellas/la lluvia/un cielo azul
bajo tierra (or debajo de la tierra)
bajo la monarquía/la república/el socialismo
La temperatura alcanzó treinta bajo cero*

I prefer to sit in the sun beneath the
stars/in the rain/beneath a blue sky
underground
under the monarchy/republic/socialism
The temperature reached thirty below
zero
under the effects of the anaesthetic
under oath/sentence of death/orders

*bajo los efectos de la anestesia
bajo juramento/pena de muerte/órdenes*

Note

Abajo de is often heard for *debajo de* in Latin America, but it is not accepted in Spain.

34.4 Cabe

An archaic or rustic equivalent of *junto a*, *cerca de* 'by'/'near' occasionally still found in Latin-American authors.

34.5 Con

(a) In many contexts it coincides with the English 'with', but it is used more widely than the latter.

Phrases like 'the boy with the blue Mercedes' require *de*: *el chico del Mercedes azul*. But if 'wearing' or 'carrying' are implied, *con* is usual unless the article is habitually associated with the person: cf. *Nunca te he visto con gafas* 'I've never seen you with glasses', but *¿Te acuerdas del viejo del impermeable que venía todos los días?* 'Do you remember the old man with/in the raincoat who used to come every day?'

Fui a la reunión con Niso
Yo sí te he visto con camisa de seda
Está escrito con/la lápiz
Con lo enferma que está . . .
té con miel/café con leche
Se produjeron varios enfrentamientos con la
policía
Se levantó con el sol
con la llegada del otoño

I went to the meeting with Niso
 I have seen you in a silk shirt
 It's written with a/in pencil
 and with her being so ill . . .
 tea with honey/coffee with milk
 There were several clashes with the
 police
 He got up with the sun
 with the arrival of autumn

Notes

(i) *Con* cannot be used in combination with the nominalizer *el*: Contrast *el chico con la americana blanca* – *el de la americana blanca* 'the boy with/in the white jacket' – 'the one with/in the white jacket'. Phrases like **el con gafas* are not Spanish.

(ii) *Con* differs from *a* in phrases like *con la llegada de la primavera* 'with the arrival of spring' in that *a la llegada* implies 'at the moment of the arrival of', which is too punctual for the onset of a season. Compare: *Todos se marcharon a la llegada de la policía* 'They all left on the arrival of the police', *Con la llegada de Pepe, todo empezó a cambiar* 'With Pepe's arrival, everything began to change'.

(b) After phrases meaning 'to show an attitude towards' *con* alternates with *para con*, much as 'with' alternates with 'towards':

Es muy cariñoso (para) con su mujer He's very affectionate towards/with his wife
Su amabilidad es igual (para) con todos His kindness is the same towards all

But if the object of the attitude does not benefit by it, *para* is not used:

Es muy crítico con su hijo He's very critical with/towards his son
Eres muy cruel con tu novia You're very cruel to your girlfriend

(c) It may be used with expressions signifying meeting, encounter, collision, 'facing up to', 'struggle with', etc.

Me encontré/tropecé hoy con tu jefe I ran into/met your boss today
Ha vuelto con su marido (ha vuelto a is not used in this sense) She's gone back to her husband (or 'She's come back with her husband')

<i>Tengo que vérmelas con el vecino</i>	I'll have to have it out with the neighbour (i.e. have a frank talk)
<i>Iba en la moto y se dio un golpe con/contra un poste</i>	He was on his motorbike and crashed into a post
<i>Mi bicicleta rozó con un camión</i>	My bicycle scraped against a lorry
<i>Tendremos que enfrentarnos con el problema/enfrentar el problema</i>	We'll have to face up to the problem
<i>Los ingleses suelen dudar con el subjuntivo</i>	English people usually hesitate over the subjunctive
<i>Estamos luchando con el problema del paro</i>	We're struggling with the problem of unemployment
<i>Está regañado con sus tíos</i>	He's fallen out with his uncle and aunt

(d) It may – strangely to English-speakers – mean 'containing':

<i>un vaso con/de agua, un saco con/de patatas</i>	a glass of water/sack of potatoes
<i>Llevaba una cesta con pan, huevos, uvas y vino (de is not possible here)</i>	He was carrying a basket of bread, eggs, grapes and wine
<i>una jeringa con morfina</i>	a syringe full of morphine

Note

This use eliminates any ambiguity caused by *de*, which either means 'full of' – *una cesta de huevos* is 'a basketful of eggs' and it cannot contain anything else – or may denote the container but not the contents, cf. *una botella de coñac* 'a bottle of cognac' or 'a cognac bottle'; but *una botella con coñac* 'a bottle with cognac in it'.

(e) 'Despite' or some other concessive phrase (*a pesar de* is often an equivalent):

<i>Con/A pesar de todos sus esfuerzos, nunca llegó a coronel</i>	Despite/for all his efforts, he never made the rank of colonel
<i>Con todo, la vida no es tan terrible</i>	Despite everything, life isn't so awful
<i>Con lo guapa que estarías con el pelo recogido . . .</i>	To think how attractive you'd look if you had your hair up . . .

(f) *Con* plus an infinitive may, like the gerund, have a conditional sense:

<i>Con hacer (or haciendo) lo que yo os digo, todo irá bien</i>	Provided you (pl.) do what I say everything will go well
<i>Sólo con pulsar una tecla el ordenador almacena los datos</i>	If you simply press a key the computer stores the data

Note

A subjunctive may also follow *con* in this conditional meaning but it has to be preceded by *que*. This must not be confused with the conjunction *conque* or with *con* plus a relative pronoun: *Con que me pagaran mis gastos me conformaba* 'I would be quite happy if they paid my expenses'.

(g) It may, like the gerund, mean 'as a result of':

<i>Se nos ha ido la tarde con hablar/hablando</i>	The afternoon's gone with all this talking
<i>No conseguirás nada con tratarme/ tratándome de esa manera</i>	You'll achieve nothing by treating me that way

(h) It may indicate the cause or origin of a condition:

<i>Estamos muy entusiasmados/ilusionados con la perspectiva de un nuevo gobierno</i>	We're very excited about the prospect of a new government
--	---

Compare *Me preocupo por ellos* 'I worry about them', and *Me preocupo de hacer todo lo posible* 'I take care to do everything possible'.

<i>Se puso enfermo con malaria (or Enfermó de malaria, Lat. Am. se enfermó)</i>	He fell ill with/from malaria
---	-------------------------------

Se mareó con el vaivén del tren

He felt nauseated/(British) 'sick' because of the swaying of the train

Se alegró con/de la noticia del nacimiento de su nieto

He cheered up at the news of his grandson's birth

Notes

Miscellaneous examples of *con* used in ways unfamiliar to English speakers: *Hace años que él se escribe con ella* 'He and she have been writing to one another for years', *Murió con más de setenta años* 'He died aged more than seventy', *Usted fue el último que le/lo vio con vida* 'You were the last one to see him alive', *Voy a verme con ella esta noche* 'I'm seeing her tonight'.

34.6 Contra

A close equivalent of 'against', but it may mean 'at' after verbs meaning firing, throwing, launching, etc.

En contra de is an equivalent of *contra* when the latter means 'in opposition to'; it becomes *en contra de que* before a verb. Use of a possessive instead of a prepositional pronoun is permitted with *en contra*: *Se están organizando en contra tuya/en contra de ti* 'They're organizing themselves against you'.

El régimen ha organizado una campaña contralen contra de la corrupción
Contra lo que creen algunos, yo no soy pesimista

The regime has organized a campaign against corruption

Apoya tu pala contra el árbol
lanzar un misil contra . . .

Despite/to the contrary of what some believe, I am not a pessimist

Lanzó la piedra contra el árbol (cf. *La lanzó al árbol* 'He threw it up at the tree', e.g. a lasso or rope)

Lean your spade against the tree to launch a missile at . . .

He threw the stone at the tree

Conviene inyectarse contra la hepatitis antes de viajar a esas regiones (not **inyectarse para . . .*)

It's a good idea to get immunized against/for hepatitis before travelling to those regions

Navegábamos contra viento y marea

We were sailing against wind and tide

Hay que dejar un depósito contra el valor del coche (or *por el coche . . .*)

You have to leave a deposit against the value of the car

¿Está usted en contra de que lo hagan?

Are you against them doing it?

Notes

(i) For *contra mí*, *en contra tuya*, etc. 'against me'/'against you' see note to 8.7.

(ii) The use of *contra* for *cuanto* in such phrases as *Cuanto más trabajas, más te dan* 'The more you work, the more they give you', heard in popular speech everywhere, should be avoided. See 5.11 for details.

34.7 De

34.7.1 General uses

Section (a) covers those uses of *de* which correspond to the English 'of' or to the genitive ending 's: these sentences should give English speakers no great problems. French speakers must resist the temptation to replace *de* by *a*: *C'est à vous?* = *¿Es de usted?* 'Is it yours?'.

(a) 'Of', 'belonging to'

el primer ministro de Tailandia
los discos de mi primo

the prime minister of Thailand
my cousin's records

la matrícula del coche
 las bisagras de la puerta
 el primero/uno de mayo
 ¿De quién es esto?

the car number-plate
 the hinges of/on the door
 the first of May
 Whose is this?

(b) Origin

See 34.7.5 for the difference between *de* and *desde*.

Soy de México
 un ser de otro planeta
 un vino de solera
 Este manuscrito es de la Biblioteca Nacional

I'm from Mexico
 a being from another planet
 a vintage wine
 This manuscript is from the National Library
 a fifteenth-century ode
 a headache

una oda del siglo quince
 un dolor de cabeza

Notes

(i) English speakers tend to use the preposition *en* to denote belonging to or originating from a place: *los hombres de Grecia* 'the men in Greece' (= Greek men), *las flores de los Andes* 'the flowers in (= of) the Andes' *Las colinas de tierra adentro son más verdes* 'The hills inland are greener'.

The temptation is particularly strong after a superlative: *Éste es el mejor restaurante de Madrid* 'This is the best restaurant in Madrid', *el más antiguo monumento del Perú* 'the most ancient monument in Peru', *el mejor momento de mi vida* 'the best moment in/of my life'. However, spoken and journalistic Mexican Spanish regularly uses *en*: *el plan más ambicioso en el mundo* (Mexican television) 'the most ambitious plan in the world', *el mejor surtido en México* 'the best range in Mexico' (advertisement).

(ii) *Viene de Toledo* normally only means 'He's coming from Toledo'; *Es de Toledo* = 'He's from Toledo'.

(c) 'Made of', 'consisting of'

una estatua de oro macizo
 un manuscrito de pergamino
 una novela de ciencia-ficción
 Tiene una voluntad de hierro
 Este yogur es de leche de oveja

a solid gold statue
 a parchment manuscript
 a science-fiction novel
 She has an iron will
 This is ewe's-milk yoghurt

(d) 'About' in the sense of 'concerning'

It is doubtful whether *de* often means 'concerning', except after certain verbs like *hablar*, *quejarse de*, *protestar*: *una carta de amor* 'a love letter' is very different from *una carta sobre el amor* 'a letter about love'.

When it is used to mean 'about', *de* implies something less formal than *sobre*, which is closer to 'on the subject of':

No quiero hablar de mis problemas personales

I don't want to talk about my personal problems

Esta noche va a hablar sobre problemas personales

Tonight he's talking on/about 'personal problems'

Es que yo quería hablar con usted de mi salario¹

Actually I wanted to talk to you about my wages

No hace más que quejarse de que tiene demasiado trabajo

All he does is moan about having too much work

¿De qué va la cosa?

What's it all about?

¹ In Spain *el salario* = 'wages', *el sueldo* = 'salary', e.g. *salario de miseria* 'starvation wages'. *Salario* = 'salary' in Latin America.

(e) 'Costing'

Las naranjas de mil pesos son las mejores
Han comprado una casa de un millón de libras

The 1000-peso oranges are the best
 They've bought a million-pound house

(f) Emotions arising from something

Tengo miedo del agua (see note)
el respeto de la los derechos humanos
Me da pena de él

I'm afraid of the water
 Respect for human rights
 I'm sorry for him

And similarly *el horror de la/hacia una cosa* 'horror towards/about a thing'.

However, after *sentir*, *experimentar* and similar verbs the following words take *por* or *hacia*: *compasión* 'pity', *simpatía* 'affection'/'liking', *admiración* 'admiration', *desprecio* 'contempt', *odio* 'hatred', etc.

Note

Also *Le tengo miedo al agua*, *Tengo miedo de/Le tengo miedo a todo*. See 34.1n.

(g) In certain adverbial phrases of manner

Me puse a pensar de qué modo podría ayudarlos
Sólo he estado en Sevilla de paso

I set about thinking how I could help them

I've only been in Seville on the way to somewhere else

Intentaron entrar de balde
Estuvimos de bromas hasta las tres de la mañana

They tried to get in free/without paying
 We were up until three telling jokes/larking about

(h) Condition (English 'as', 'in')

This construction is closely related to the previous one.

De pequeña yo era muy bajita
Trabajó dos meses de camarero
 —¿De qué vas al baile? —*De pastora*

As a little girl I was very small
 He worked as a waiter for two months
 'What are you going to the ball as?' 'As a shepherdess'

Tú aquí estás de más
Yo de ti/de usted no lo haría (or *Yo que tú . . .* see 25.11)

You're not needed here
 If I were you I wouldn't do it

Vi a una criada de blanco paseando al niño

I saw a maid in white taking the child for a walk

(i) To mean 'if'

For *de* plus the infinitive used for *si* in the if-clause of a conditional sentence, see 25.8.3.

(j) Age, measurements

un hombre de cuarenta años
un pan de tres días
Esta sogá tiene tres metros de largo

a man aged forty
 a three-day old loaf
 This rope is three metres long

(k) *De* is used in certain circumstances with adjectives before an infinitive. Compare: *Su conducta es difícil de comprender* 'His behaviour is difficult to understand' and *Es difícil comprender su conducta* 'It's difficult to understand his behaviour'. See 18.10 for further examples and discussion.

(l) *De* is used after *más* and *menos* before numerals and quantities: *Ha comprado más/menos de tres kilos* 'He's bought more/less than three kilos'. See 5.5 for further discussion.

(m) *De* replaces *que* in comparisons involving a clause:

<i>Es más listo de lo que parece</i>	He's cleverer than he seems
<i>No uses más de los que necesitas</i>	Don't use more than those you need

See 5.6 for discussion.

(n) *De* alternates with *para* in sentences of the type 'His attitude is not to be copied', 'His stories aren't to be believed':

<i>Sus excusas no son de/para creer</i>	His excuses aren't to be believed
<i>Su habilidad no es de/para subestimar</i>	His cleverness is not to be underestimated

(o) After certain verbs meaning 'to take by', 'seize by', 'pull on', etc.

<i>La cogió de la mano</i>	He took her by the hand
<i>Me tiraba de la manga</i>	He was pulling on my sleeve
<i>El profesor le asió de una oreja</i>	The teacher took him by an ear

(p) To denote the agent in some types of passive construction and to indicate the author of a work or the main actor in a film or play:

<i>acompañado de su esposa</i>	accompanied by his wife
<i>un cuadro de Velázquez</i>	a painting by Velázquez
<i>una película de Clark Gable</i>	a Clark Gable film

See 34.14.9 note (ii) for discussion of participle + *de*.

(q) In certain set time phrases

<i>de día/de noche</i>	by day/by night
<i>Se levantó muy de mañana</i>	He got up very early in the morning

(r) In construction of the type 'poor you' (*pobre de ti*), 'that fool John', etc.

<i>Tendrás que habértelas con el gandul de Fulano</i>	You'll have to tackle that lay-about so-and-so
<i>¿Sabes lo que ha hecho la pobre de su mujer?</i>	Do you know what his poor wife has done?

(s) Partitive *de*

De is occasionally used before adjectives – particularly demonstrative adjectives – to mean 'some of', 'one of': *Hay de todo* 'There is a bit of everything':

<i>Puedes comprar de todo</i>	You can buy a little of everything
<i>Tráiganos de ese vino que nos sirvió ayer</i>	Bring us some of that wine you served us yesterday

34.7.2 *Deber* or *deber de*?

See 21.3 for details.

34.7.3 *De* before *que*

Some verbs, all verbal phrases involving a noun or adjective, and some adverbial phrases, must be followed by *de que* when they introduce a clause: *Se dio cuenta de que ya no llovía* 'He realized that it was no longer raining'. See 33.4.2 for discussion.

34.7.4 *Dequeísmo*

For the popular (but stigmatized) tendency to use *de que* instead of *que* after verbs of belief and communication, e.g. *¿Dice de que no viene* for *Dice que no viene* 'She says she isn't coming', see 33.4.3.

34.7.5 Desde and de meaning 'from'

The existence of two Spanish words which both mean 'from' is a source of confusion. Furthermore, the distinction is not always strictly observed by native speakers.

Desde stresses the idea of movement or distance more than *de*. It is therefore appropriate when motion from a place requires some unusual effort or when the point of origin is mentioned but not the destination, as in *Os veo desde mi ventana* 'I can see you from my window'. It is also freely used in time phrases.

<i>Desde nuestro balcón se divisa la cima de Mulhacén</i>	From our balcony one can make out the summit of Mulhacén
<i>Desde aquí el camino es muy bueno</i>	From here the road is very good
<i>Avanzó desde la puerta con un cuchillo en la mano</i>	He moved forward from the door with a knife in his hand
<i>He venido andando desde el centro</i>	I've walked all the way from the centre
<i>Y entonces una sogá lo atrapó desde atrás</i>	Then he was caught from behind by a rope
(J. Cortázar, Argentina)	
<i>Desde hoy/A partir de hoy tienen que llegar a tiempo</i>	From today you must arrive on time
<i>Los tenemos desde cincuenta centavos hasta cinco pesos</i>	We have them from 50 centavos to 5 pesos

Notes

(i) If *a*, *hasta* or some other preposition of destination appears, *desde* is often interchangeable with *de*: *Del/Desde aquí hasta el centro las calles son muy estrechas* 'From here to the centre the roads are very narrow', *Del/Desde aquí a la cima mide ocho mil metros* 'From here to the summit it measures 8,000 metres', *Desde/De 1922 a 1942 estuve en Colombia* 'From 1922 to 1942 I was in Colombia', but *He estado en Colombia desde 1922* 'I've been in Colombia since 1922'.

(ii) If no such prepositional phrase of destination occurs *desde* is usually the safer option, though usage is fickle: *las partículas subatómicas que llegan desde/de otras galaxias* 'subatomic particles that arrive from other galaxies', *¿Desde dónde hablas?* 'Where are you talking from?' (e.g. by radio or phone).

(iii) In the following sentences only *de* is possible: *Yo soy de Madrid* 'I'm from Madrid', *Las hojas caen ya de los abedules* 'The leaves are already falling from the birches', *Sacó tres diamantes de la bolsa* 'He took three diamonds from the bag', *Pasó de secretario a jefe en tres meses* 'He went from secretary to boss in three months', *Hizo un modelo de un trozo de madera* 'He made a model from a piece of wood', *Del techo pendía una enorme araña de luces* 'From the ceiling hung an enormous chandelier', *Se ha venido de España a vivir en Inglaterra* 'He's come from Spain to live in England', *de Pascuas a Ramos* 'once in a blue moon' (lit. 'from Easter to Palm Sunday').

(iv) *Desde ya* is commonly found in the River Plate region with the meaning of 'right away'. *Desde luego* means 'of course' on both continents.

34.8 Durante

This word and other ways of saying 'for a period of time' is discussed under 32.2.

34.9 En

As a preposition of place *en* is disconcertingly vague since it combines the meanings of 'in' and 'on' (French *sur* and *dans*), as well as 'at', 'into', 'onto': *en la caja* 'in the box', *en la mesa* 'on/at the table', *Está en la comisaría* 'He's in/at

the police station'. For the relationship between *en* and 'at' in sentences like 'at the station', 'at Cambridge', see 34.1d.

When it means 'on a horizontal surface', it alternates with *sobre* and, sometimes, with *encima de*. Thus one can say *en/sobre/encima de la mesa* 'on the table', but *Mi hijo duerme en mi cama* 'My son sleeps in my bed', since 'inside' is implied.

En may be replaced by *dentro de* 'inside' if clarity or emphasis are required.

(a) As an equivalent of 'in', 'on' or 'at':

<i>Tus camisas están en el cajón</i>	Your shirts are in the drawer
<i>Cuelga el cuadro en la pared</i>	Hang the picture on the wall
<i>Dio unos golpes discretos en la puerta</i>	He tapped discreetly on the door
<i>Gasta mucho dinero en juegos de azar</i>	He spends a lot of money on gambling (lit. 'games of chance')
<i>Los empleados estaban sentados en sus mesas</i> (see note (i))	The clerks were sitting at their tables
<i>El agua ha penetrado en las vigas</i>	The water has soaked into the joists
<i>Uno de mis pendientes se ha caído en el agua</i> (see note (ii))	One of my earrings has fallen into the water
<i>Propusieron convertirlo en sanatorio</i>	They suggested turning it into a sanatorium
<i>en otoño/primavera/1924</i>	In autumn/spring/1924
<i>Todavía está en proyecto</i>	It's still at the planning stage
<i>Te da ciento y raya en latín</i>	He's miles better than you in Latin

Notes

(i) Compare *Se sentó a la mesa* 'He sat down at table' with *Siempre se comporta mal en la mesa* 'He always misbehaves at table'. See 34.1d for discussion.

(ii) The example suggests the wearer was already in the water, e.g. swimming. If trajectory down to the water is meant, *a* is more usual: *Se tiró al río* 'He jumped into the river', *El avión cayó al mar* 'The plane fell into the sea'.

(iii) *Entrar* and similar verbs take *en* (often *a* in Latin America, and occasionally in Spain): *Entró en el cuarto* 'He entered the room'.

(b) To express the thing by which something else is judged or estimated:

<i>Los daños se han calculado en diez millones de dólares</i>	The damage has been calculated at ten million dollars
<i>El tipo oficial quedó fijado en 151,93 por dólar (El País)</i>	The official rate was fixed at 151.93 to the dollar
<i>Lo vendieron en/por un millón de pesetas</i>	They sold it for a million pesetas
<i>Te tenía en más</i>	I thought better of you
<i>Me lo presupuestaron en cien mil</i>	They gave me an estimate of 100,000 for it
<i>Se nota que es inglés en su manera de hablar</i>	One can tell he's English by the way he talks

(c) In a number of adverbial phrases:

<i>Lo tomaron en serio</i>	They took it seriously
<i>en cueros/en bromalen balde</i>	Naked/as a joke/pointlessly
<i>en fila/en seguida (or enseguida)</i>	in a row/straight away
<i>Estoy en contra</i>	I'm against

(d) To mean 'as'

Como is much more usual nowadays in the following sentences:

<i>Hablar de esa manera, en/como ser superior, es absurdo</i>	To talk like that, as a superior being, is absurd
<i>Os hablo en/como perito</i>	I'm talking to you as an expert

(e) After a number of common verbs, and in several miscellaneous constructions:

<i>Pensé mucho en usted</i>	I thought of you a lot
<i>Quedamos en vernos a las siete</i>	We agreed to meet at seven
<i>Tardaron cinco semanas en reparar el coche</i>	They took five weeks to mend the car
<i>Vaciló en contestarme</i>	He hesitated before answering me
<i>No dudó en devolvérmelo</i>	He didn't hesitate over giving it back to me
<i>No ayuda en nada</i>	He/She/It's no help at all
<i>La reina abdicó en su hijo</i>	The queen abdicated in favour of her son
<i>Se interesa mucho en/por la filatelia</i>	He's very interested in stamp collecting
<i>El fue el primero/último en hacerlo</i>	He was the first/last to do it

Notes

(i) See 18.2 for further remarks about prepositional usage with verbs. For the obsolete construction *en* + gerund see 20.5.

(ii) *En la mañana* may be used in Latin America for *por la mañana*: *En las mañanas salíamos a montar a caballo* (A. Mastretta, Mexico) 'In the mornings we used to go riding'.

34.10 Entre

Both 'between' and 'among'. *Entre* also has a number of uses unfamiliar to English speakers.

Prepositional pronoun forms are not nowadays used after *entre*: *Entre Juan y tú recogeréis los papeles* 'You and John will pick up the pieces of paper between you' (not **entre Juan y ti*).

(a) 'Between'

<i>Estábamos entre la espada y la pared</i>	We were between the sword and the wall (i.e. 'we had our backs to the wall')
<i>Entre tú/usted y yo . . .</i>	Between you and me . . .
<i>Lo terminaron entre María y su hermana</i>	Maria and her sister finished it between them

Note

The last example is typical of a construction unfamiliar to English speakers: *Llenan el pantano entre cuatro ríos* (from Moliner, I, 1146) 'Four rivers combine to fill the reservoir', *Lo escribieron entre cuatro de ellos* 'Four of them wrote it between them'.

(b) 'Among'

It is used with a wider range of nouns than its English equivalent, e.g. *entre la niebla* 'in the mist', *Encontraron la sortija entre la arena* 'They found the ring in the sand'.

<i>No pude encontrar el libro entre tantos tomos</i>	I couldn't find the book among so many volumes
<i>Vivió diez años entre los beduinos de Arabia</i>	He lived for ten years among the Bedouins of Arabia
<i>No podía decidir entre tantas posibilidades</i>	I couldn't choose among so many possibilities

. . . *y entre el ruido de la lluvia se escuchaba el ladrido de los perros* (L. Sepúlveda, Chile)

. . . and through/above the noise of the rain the barking of the dogs was heard

(c) 'Among themselves', 'one from the other'

In the second of these two meanings *entre* is used in a way unfamiliar to English speakers. It is especially liable to appear with the pronoun *sí* (discussed in detail at 11.5.3):

En casa hablan castellano entre sí (or *entre ellos*)

Es más fácil que dos personas vivan en

armonía cuando se respetan entre sí

Los idiomas que se hablan en la India son muy diferentes entre sí

At home they speak Spanish among themselves

It's easier for two people to live in harmony when they respect one another

The languages spoken in India differ widely one from another

(d) It can translate the English phrase 'what with'

Entre los niños y el ruido que hacen los albañiles, me estoy volviendo loca entre pitos y flautas . . .

What with the children and the noise the builders make, I'm going mad what with one thing and another (lit. 'what with whistles and flutes')

(e) In certain phrases, in a way strange to English speakers

Van como ovejas al matadero, decía entre sí

Decía entre mí . . .

El museo está abierto entre semana

They're going like lambs to the slaughter, he said to himself

I said to myself . . .

The museum is open on weekdays and Saturdays

34.11 *Hacia*

(a) A close equivalent of 'towards', but rather wider in application since it also translates the English suffix *-ward/-wards*:

El satélite viaja hacia Venus

La muchedumbre se dirigía hacia el palacio presidencial

Hacia el oeste no había más que dunas

La actitud de la CE hacia tales problemas parece ambigua

El incidente ocurrió hacia las tres de la tarde

Se apoyaba hacia delante en un bastón

The satellite is travelling towards Venus

The crowd was making for the presidential palace

Towards the west there was nothing but dunes

The attitude of the EC towards such problems seems ambiguous

The incident occurred towards three in the afternoon

He was leaning forwards on a stick

In time phrases *hacia* can usually be replaced by *sobre*, and with dates by *para*: *sobre las tres de la tarde*, 'around 3 p.m.', *para octubre* 'towards/around October'.

(b) Emotions, attitudes 'towards'

Por, *con* and *para con* are also possible, but not always interchangeable. Deep emotions such as love or hatred prefer *hacia* or *por*; attitudes (e.g. kindness, severity, irritability) prefer *hacia* or *con*:

su profundo amor hacia/por/la todo lo andaluz
Mostraba una indiferencia total hacia/por las críticas

his deep love for everything Andalusian
He displayed total indifference towards criticisms

la simpatía de los insurgentes hacia el modelo cubano

The insurgents' sympathy for the Cuban model

For *para con* see 34.5b.

34.12 Hasta

(a) 'As far as', 'until', 'up to'

hasta ahora . . .

Llegaron hasta el oasis, pero tuvieron que volverse

No nos vamos hasta el día trece

Bailaron hasta no poder más

until now/up to now

They got as far as the oasis, but had to turn back

We're not leaving until the thirteenth

They danced until they were exhausted

Estoy de exámenes hasta la coronilla (or hasta las narices)

hasta luego

I've had enough of exams (I'm sick to death of exams)

goodbye/au revoir

(b) *Hasta que no*

See 23.2.4d for this construction.

(c) As an equivalent of *incluso* 'even'

Hasta llegó a ofrecerles dinero

Hasta en Inglaterra hace calor a veces

He even went as far as offering them money

Even in England it's hot sometimes

Note

In Mexico, and in neighbouring countries, *hasta* has acquired the meaning of 'not until': *Perdona que te llame hasta ahora* (C. Fuentes, dialogue), 'Sorry for not ringing you before now', *Bajamos hasta la Plaza de la Independencia* 'We're not getting off until Independence Square', *hasta entonces me di cuenta* 'I realized only then' or 'I didn't realize until then'.

34.13 Mediante

A close equivalent of 'by means of' some instrument, argument or device:

Es inútil intentar abolir el abuso del alcohol mediante/por/con decreto

Lograron abrir la caja mediante/con una antorcha de butano

It is useless to try to abolish alcohol abuse by decree

They managed to open the safe by means of a butane torch

34.14 Para and por

34.14.1 The difference between them

The existence of two prepositions that both sometimes seem to mean 'for', French *pour*, is one of the stumbling blocks of the language. The difference is best learnt from examples and can hardly be stated clearly in abstract. One basic distinction is that *para* expresses purpose or destination and *por* cause or motive; the difference is perhaps most clearly visible in the two sentences *Hago esto para ti* 'I'm **making** this for you (to give to you)' and *Hago esto por ti* 'I'm **doing** this because of you/on your behalf'. But such contrasting sentences are rare. English speakers are usually confused by sentences like

'This fence is for the rabbits': since this really means 'because of the rabbits' one must say *Esta valla es por los conejos*.

The Spanish Civil Guards' motto *Todo por la Patria* 'Everything for the home country' exemplifies *por* at its most confusing. It means 'everything (we do is done) for our country', i.e. 'All our actions are inspired by our country', whereas *todo para la Patria* would mean 'everything (we have is) for our country', i.e. 'We give all our belongings to our country'.

It is useful to recall that if 'for' can be replaced by 'out of' or 'because of' then *por* may be the correct translation, but not *para*: *Lo hizo por amor* 'He did it for (out of) love', *Lo hago por el dinero* 'I do it for (because of) the money':

<i>Llevo el abrigo por/la causa de mi madre</i>	I'm wearing this coat because of my mother (she'll be cross/worried if I don't)
<i>Llevo este abrigo para/la mi madre</i>	I'm taking this coat for/to my mother
<i>Han venido por ti</i>	They've come to get you/because of you/instead of you
<i>Han venido estos paquetes para ti</i>	These parcels have come for you
<i>Lo has conseguido por mí</i>	You've got it as a result of me (i.e. I helped you)
<i>Lo has conseguido para mí</i>	You've got it for me

Particularly troublesome is the fact that *por* and *para* can be almost identical in meaning in some sentences that state an intention: *Ha venido por/para estar contigo* 'He's come to be with you', whereas in others only *para* is possible: *El carpintero ha venido para reparar la puerta* 'The carpenter's come to mend the door'. This problem is discussed at 34.14.7.

Note

The form *pa* is substandard for *para* and should be avoided. It is accepted in a few humorous familiar expressions used in Spain (and possibly elsewhere), e.g. *Es muy echao p'alante* 'He's very forward', *Estoy p'al arrastre* 'I'm all in/exhausted', *p'al gato* 'worthless'/'junk' (literally 'for the cat').

34.14.2 Uses of *para*

Para is used:

(a) To indicate purpose, object or destination, e.g. *¿Para quién es esto?* 'Who(m) is this for?', *Trabaja para ganar dinero* 'He works to earn money', etc.

<i>Todo mi cariño es para ti</i>	All my affection is for you
<i>Tomo pastillas para/con el fin de adelgazar</i>	I take pills in order to slim
<i>Una mesa para dos, por favor</i>	A table for two, please
<i>Se preparó para saltar</i>	He got ready to jump
<i>Lo hace para/con el fin de llamar la atención</i>	He does it to attract attention
<i>Estudia para médico</i>	He's studying to become a doctor

Notes

(i) For the distinction between *He venido para verle* and *He venido por verle*, which both mean 'I've come to see him', see 34.14.7.

(ii) *Para* can also express ironic purpose, like the English 'only to': *Se abstuvo durante años de fumar y beber, para luego morir en un accidente de coche* 'He refrained for years from smoking and drinking, only to die in a car accident', *Corrió a casa para encontrarse con que ya se habían marchado* 'He hurried home only to find that they'd already left'.

(iii) The following construction may also be thought of as expressing the object or purpose of something: *Sus historias no son para/de creer* 'His stories aren't to be believed' (lit. 'aren't for believing'), *No es para tanto* 'It's not that serious'/'It doesn't call for that much fuss'.

(b) Direction after verbs of motion*Íbamos para casa cuando empezó a llover*

We were on the way home when it started raining

Ya va para viejo

He's getting old now

Va para ministro

He's on the way to becoming a minister

(c) To indicate advantage, disadvantage, usefulness, need*Fumar es malo para la salud*

Smoking is bad for the health

La paciencia es un requisito indispensable para los profesores

Patience is an indispensable requirement for teachers

Con esto tenemos para todos

With this we've enough for everybody

Es mucho dinero para tres días de vacaciones

It's a lot of money for three days' holiday/vacation

Tú eres para él lo más importante

You're the most important thing to/for him

(d) Reaction, response, mood*Para mí eso no es justo*

That doesn't seem fair to me

Esto para mí huele a vinagre/Esto a mí me huele a vinagre

This smells of vinegar to me

Para mí que hablas mejor que él

My impression is that you speak better than him

Notes**(i)** For *para con* in sentences like *Es muy atento para con los invitados* 'He's very courteous towards guests', see 34.5b.**(ii)** *Para* can also translate 'not in the mood for': *No estoy para bromas* 'I'm not in the mood for jokes'.**(e) To translate 'for' when it means 'considering', 'in view of'***Está muy alto para su edad*

He's very tall for his age

Estás muy viejo para esos trotes

You're very old for all that

Es poco dinero para tanto trabajo

It's not much money for so much work

(f) 'To' in certain reflexive expressions*Me lo guardo para mí*

I'm keeping it to/for myself

Esto acabará mal, me decía para mí/entre mí

This will end badly, I said to myself

Murmuraba para/entre sí

He was muttering to himself

(g) 'About' in the meaning of 'on the point of'*Ya deben estar para/al llegar*

They must be about to arrive

La leche está para cocer

The milk's about to boil

—Pues yo estoy para cumplir treinta y cinco la semana que viene (E. Arenas, dialogue, Spain)

Well, I'm going to be thirty-five next week

NoteIn Latin America *estar por* is used: *Está por llover* 'It's about to rain', *En 1942, cuando volvió definitivamente, estaba por cumplir veinte años* (S. Pitol, Mexico) 'In 1942, when he came back for good, he was on the verge of his twentieth birthday'. In Spain *estar por* means 'to be in favour of/to be thinking about doing something'.**34.14.3 Para in time phrases****(a) To translate 'by'***Lo tendré preparado para las cinco*

I'll have it ready by/for five o'clock

*Estaremos de vuelta para la merienda
Para entonces ya estaremos todos muertos*

We'll be back by tea
We'll all be dead by then

(b) 'For'

Para sometimes expresses the idea of 'for *n* days/weeks/years'. See 32.3.6 for further discussion.

(c) 'Around', 'towards'

*El embalse estará terminado para finales de
noviembre
Volveremos para agosto*

The dam will be finished around the end
of November
We'll return around August

Notes

(i) In the last example *para* is more precise than *hacia* and *por* and less precise than *en*.

(ii) *Ir para* is a colloquial translation of 'for nearly . . .' in time phrases: *Va para cinco años que trabajo aquí* 'I've been working here for nearly five years'.

(d) 'Not enough to', 'considering how much'

*No había tomado suficientes pastillas como
para matarse (M. Vázquez Montalbán,
Spain)
un matrimonio rápido, bastante rápido para
lo mucho que siempre se dice que hay que
pensárselo (J. Marías, Spain)*

She hadn't taken enough pills to kill
herself

a quick marriage, pretty quick
considering how much they always say
one ought to think it over

34.14.4 Main uses of *por*

(a) *Por* often means simply 'because of', as in *¿por qué?* (two words) 'why?' (i.e. 'because of what?') and *porque* 'because':

*No pudimos salir por/la causa de la nieve
el índice de muertes por/la causa de
infecciones pulmonares
Lo hice por dinero
la razón por la que me voy
muchas gracias por el regalo
Te ha pasado por tonto
Las críticas de la izquierda vienen por/la causa
de tres temas
. . . el profesor la calificó con un cero por no
saber la lección (M. Puig, Argentina)
Las empresas navieras sufren un descalabro
importante por la situación actual del
mercado (ABC, Spain)*

We couldn't go out because of the snow
the death rate from lung infections

I did it for money
the reason for my leaving
many thanks for the present
It happened to you because you're a fool
Criticism from the left arises from three
topics
. . . the teacher gave her a zero because
she didn't know the lesson
Shipping firms have suffered significant
losses due to the present state of the
market

Por may thus indicate the origin or inspiration of an emotion or mental state:

*No lo puedo ver por lo engreído que es
Me fastidia por lo mal que canta
Le/Lo odio por su mal genio
su amor por/hacia/a sus hijos
Siento mucho cariño por/hacia ella
El gobierno demuestra poco interés por los
derechos de la mujer
Tuvo un recuerdo nostálgico por el Londres
de su juventud
La delató por despecho*

I can't stand him for his conceitedness
He annoys me because of his bad singing
I hate him for/because of his bad temper
his love for his children
I feel great fondness for her
The government shows little interest in
women's rights
He had a nostalgic recollection of the
London of his youth
He informed on her out of spite

(b) Por = 'by' in passive constructions

Sus novelas fueron elogiadas por los críticos
La catedral fue diseñada por Gaudi
El suelo estaba cubierto por/de
un lecho de hierba
Sociedad y economía aztecas por M.
León-Portilla

His novels were praised by the critics
 The cathedral was designed by Gaudi
 The ground was covered by a bed of
 grass
 Aztec Society and Economy by M.
 León-Portilla

Notes

(i) For *de* meaning 'by' to indicate the author of a work or the main actor in a film or play, see 34.7.1p.

(ii) *De* is not nowadays used in passive sentences to mean 'by', except with certain verbs which are best learnt separately. Where there is a possibility of using either *por* or *de*, the former usually implies an active agent, the latter generally implies a state. *De* is therefore common when *estar* is used; see 28.2.5 for *estar convencido* contrasted with *ser convencido*.

Examples: *Me sentía tentado de tomar el atajo* 'I felt tempted to take the short cut', *Jesús fue tentado por el Diabolo* 'Jesus was tempted by the Devil', *María dijo algunas palabras en voz muy baja . . . seguidas de un ruido de sillas* (E. Sábato, Argentina) 'Maria said a few words in a very low voice, followed by a sound of chairs', *El formulario debe estar acompañado de dos fotos* 'The form must be accompanied by two photos', *Llegó acompañado por dos agentes* 'He arrived escorted by two policemen', *Yo nunca he estado persuadido de la verdad de su versión de los hechos* (state) 'I've never been persuaded of the truth of his version of the facts', *Fui persuadido por su versión de los hechos* (action) 'I was persuaded by his version of the facts', *Las zonas pantanosas suelen estar plagadas de mosquitos* 'Marshy zones are usually plagued with mosquitoes', *En verano las vacas están atormentadas por las moscas* 'In summer the cows are tormented by flies'.

(c) 'Runs on', 'works by', 'by means of'

El sistema de alarma funciona por rayos infrarrojos
El tratamiento por/con rayos X ha producido resultados animadores
Un coche que marcha por/con/la gas-oil
Se puede pagar por/con talón bancario
Abrieron la puerta por la fuerza
[el Buda] enseñaba la aniquilación del dolor por la aniquilación del deseo (J.L. Borges, Argentina)

The alarm system works by infra-red rays
 Treatment by X-rays has produced encouraging results
 A car which runs on diesel oil
 Payment by cheque accepted
 They opened the door by force
 [the Buddha] taught the extinction of suffering by the extinction of desire

(d) 'In support of'

This includes the idea of effort or activity on behalf of anything:

Yo voté por los liberales
una campaña por/en pro de/la favor de la libertad de la prensa
¿Estás tú por la violencia?
Él es senador por Massachusetts
Aprendió a tocar el piano por sí misma/ella sola

I voted for the Liberals
 a campaign for press freedom
 Do you support violence?
 He's senator for Massachusetts
 She learnt to play the piano by herself

(e) Exchange for, substitute for, distribution per

Llévelo al departamento de reclamaciones y se lo cambiarán por uno nuevo
Te han dado gato por liebre

Take it to the complaints department and they'll change it for a new one
 They've served you cat for hare (i.e. swindled you)

<i>Te quieres hacer pasar por lo que no eres</i>	You're trying to pass for other than what you are
<i>¿Por quién me toma usted?</i>	Who do you take me for?
<i>Lo doy por supuesto/sentado</i>	I take it for granted
<i>Él dará la clase por mí</i>	He'll give the class instead of me
<i>Come por tres</i>	He eats three persons' share
<i>tres raciones por persona</i>	three helpings per person
<i>cientos kilómetros por hora</i>	100 km an hour
<i>40 horas a la/por semana (a is more usual)</i>	40 hours a week
<i>El dos por ciento es protestante/son protestantes</i>	Two per cent are Protestants

(f) Prices, amounts of money

<i>un cheque por/de cien dólares</i>	a cheque/(US) 'check' for 100 dollars
<i>Compró una casa por un millón de dólares</i>	He bought a house for one million dollars

Note

Por is used with *pagar* only when the verb has a following direct object: *He pagado mil libras por este ordenador* 'I paid £1000 for this computer', *He pagado mucho por él* 'I paid a lot for it'. But *Yo lo pagué la semana pasada* 'I paid for it last week'.

(g) 'To judge by'

<i>por las señas que me ha dado . . .</i>	from the description he's given me . . .
<i>por lo que tú dices . . .</i>	from what you say . . .
<i>por lo visto</i>	apparently

(h) 'In search of'

Peninsular speech prefers *a por*, a construction grudgingly admitted by grammarians and rejected by Latin Americans.

<i>Ha ido (a) por agua</i>	He's gone for water
<i>Le enviaron (a) por el médico</i>	They sent him for the doctor
<i>Voy al baño a por Kleenex (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain)</i>	I'm going/I go to the bathroom/toilet to fetch a tissue
<i>Fui por mi abrigo (A. Mastretta, Mexico)</i>	I went for/to get my coat

(i) 'Through' (= 'by means of')

<i>Conseguí el empleo por/la través de mi tío</i>	I got the job through my uncle
<i>Me enteré por un amigo</i>	I found out through/from a friend
<i>Le reconocí por la descripción</i>	I recognised him from the description

(j) *Por* in adverbial phrases of manner

<i>por correo/avión/mar (but en tren, en coche, en bicicleta, a pie)</i>	by mail/air/sea
<i>Los denuncio por igual</i>	I denounce both/all sides equally
<i>por lo general/generalmente</i>	generally
<i>por lo corriente/corrientemente</i>	usually
<i>Me lo tendrás que decir por las buenas o por las malas</i>	You'll have to tell me one way or another

(k) 'However . . .' in concessions (see 16.13)

<i>Por más inteligente que seas, no lo vas a resolver</i>	However intelligent you may be, you won't solve it
<i>Por mucho que protestes, te quedas aquí</i>	However much you protest, you're staying here
<i>Por fuerte que ustedes griten, el patrón no les sube el salario</i>	However loud you shout, the boss won't raise your wages

(l) Miscellaneous examples

Por mí haz lo que quieras
 ¿Por quién pregunta?
Es agrimensor, o algo por el estilo
Siéntese por Dios (not brusque, i.e. not
'Sit down for God's sake!')
Cinco por tres son quince
Mide 7 por 5

As far as I'm concerned, do what you like
 Who are you asking for?
 He's a surveyor, or something like that
 Do please sit down
 5 times 3 equals 15
 It measures 7 by 5

(m) With numerous verbs

apurarse por
asustarse por/de
decidirse por
desvelarse por
disculparse por
interesarse por
jurar por
molestarse por
optar por
preocuparse por/de
tomar por

to get anxious about
 to get frightened about
 to decide on
 to be very concerned about
 to apologize for
 to be interested in
 to swear by/on
 to bother about
 to opt for
 to worry about
 to take for

34.14.5 Por in time phrases**(a) Por = 'in'**

Debió ser por mayo
por aquellos días

It must have been in May
 in those days/during those days

For 'just for', 'only for' and a more detailed discussion of *por* in time phrases see 32.3.5.

34.14.6 Por as a preposition of place**(a) 'All over', 'throughout'**

He viajado por Latinoamérica
Había muchos libros desparramados por el
suelo

I've travelled around Latin America
 There were many books scattered over
 the floor

(b) 'In': less precise than *en* and often implying motion

La vi por/en la calle
Debe estar por el jardín

I saw her in the street
 It must be somewhere in the garden

(c) 'Up to'

El agua le llegaba por la cintura
Me llegas por los hombros

The water was up to his waist
 You reach my shoulders (e.g. to a
 growing child)

(d) 'Through', 'out of', 'down'

Se tiró por la ventana
Entró por la puerta
Se cayó por la escalera
Salía agua por el/del grifo

He threw himself out of the window
 He came through the door
 He fell down the stairs
 Water was coming out of the tap

(e) In conjunction with adverbs of place, to denote direction or whereabouts

por aquí
por allí

this way/around here
 that way/around there

por delante
por detrás
por entre

from the front/in front
 from behind/behind
 in between

34.14.7 He venido por hablarle or para hablarle?

Both prepositions may translate 'to' or 'in order to' in sentences like 'I've come to talk to you'. In some cases they are virtually interchangeable (see also 33.5.1):

¿Para qué has venido?
¿Por qué has venido?
Estoy aquí para/por verte

What have you come for?
 Why have you come?
 I'm here to see him

A useful rule seems to be: if the English sentence can be rewritten using a phrase like 'out of a desire to' or 'from an urge to', then *por* can be used. If not, *para* is indicated; i.e. *por* refers to the mental state of the subject, *para* to the goal of his action.

Thus, *Me dijeron que estabas en Madrid y he venido por verte de nuevo* 'I heard you were in Madrid and I've come to (out of an urge to) see you again' is possible. But **El fontanero ha venido por reparar el grifo* is as absurd as 'The plumber has come out of an urge to mend the tap'.

Another example may clarify the point: —*¿Para qué salgo a cenar contigo?* —*Para cenar* (not *por*) "'What am I going out to dinner with you for?" "(In order) to eat"', —*¿Por qué salgo a cenar contigo?* —*Por/Para estar contigo* "'Why am I going out to dinner with you?" "To be with you"':

Estuve toda la noche sin dormir por/para no perderme el eclipse
Llegó a las cinco de la mañana por/para cogerlos en la cama
No lo haces más que por/para fastidiar
Ella le habría vendido el alma al Diablo por casarse con él (G. García Márquez, Colombia)
Le prometo que haré lo posible por dar con él (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)
Dame una aspirina para calmar el dolor
Incluso contrataron a un detective privado para buscarle/lo

I spent the whole night without sleeping so as not to miss the eclipse
 He arrived at five in the morning so as to catch them in bed
 You only do it to annoy
 She'd have sold her soul to the Devil to marry him
 I promise you I'll do everything possible to find him
 Give me an aspirin to ease the pain
 They even hired a private detective to look for him

34.14.8 Some vital differences between *por* and *para*

Tengo muchas cosas por/sin hacer
Tengo muchas cosas para hacer
Estoy por hacerlo
Estoy (aquí) para hacerlo
Estaba para hacerlo (Lat. Am. por)
Está por/sin acabar
Está para acabar
Está para acabar de un momento a otro

I have a lot of things still undone
 I have many things to do
 I feel inclined to do it
 I'm here in order to do it
 I was about to do it
 It isn't finished yet
 This has to be finished
 It's about to finish at any moment

34.14.9 'For' not translated by *por* or *para*

la razón de mi queja
Bebía porque no tenía otra cosa que hacer

the reason for my complaining
 She drank for want of something else to do

<i>Los días eran cortos pues era ahora noviembre</i>	The days were short, for it was now November
<i>el deseo de fama</i>	the desire for fame
<i>Lloró de alegría</i>	She wept for joy
<i>Es una buena esposa a pesar de lo que gruñe</i>	She's a good wife for all her grumbling
<i>No dijo una palabra durante dos horas</i>	He didn't say a word for two hours
<i>No le/lo he visto desde hace meses</i>	I haven't seen him for months
<i>Llevamos tres semanas sin que recojan la basura</i>	They haven't collected our rubbish/(US) 'trash' for three weeks
<i>Estuvimos horas esperando</i>	We waited for hours
<i>Se podía ver muy lejos</i>	You could see for miles
<i>ir a dar un paseo</i>	to go for a walk
<i>irse de vacaciones</i>	to go for a holiday/vacation
<i>Me voy a Madrid unos días</i>	I'm going to Madrid for a few days

34.15 Según

'According to', 'depending on'. As with *entre*, a following pronoun appears in the subject form: *según tú* 'according to you', not **según ti*:

<i>según el parte meteorológico</i>	according to the weather report
<i>Iremos modificando el programa de estudios según el tipo de estudiante que se matricule</i>	We'll modify the syllabus according to the type of student that signs on
<i>Los precios varían según a qué dentista vayas (or según el dentista al que vayas)</i>	The prices vary according to which dentist you go to
<i>Me decidiré luego, según cómo salgan las cosas</i>	I'll decide later, depending on how things turn out

Notes

(i) As the examples show, *según* often functions as an adverbial: *¿Vas tú también? —Según* "'Are you going too?" "It depends"', *La policía detenía a los manifestantes según iban saliendo del edificio* 'The police were arresting the demonstrators as they came out of the building', *Lo haremos según llegue papá (en cuanto llegue is more usual)* 'We'll do it as soon as father arrives', *Según llegábamos al aparcamiento . . . un automóvil abandonaba un lugar grande y espacioso* (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain) 'Just as we were arriving at the parking lot a car was leaving a large and roomy parking space', *Según dicen . . .* 'According to what they say . . .

(ii) The following are colloquial or dialect: *?Dirías que es un millonario según habla (por la manera en que habla)* 'You'd think he was a millionaire from the way he talks', *?A mí, según qué cosas, no me gusta hacerlas* (regional for *ciertas cosas . . .*) 'There are certain kinds of thing I don't like doing'. The last example is typical of eastern Spain.

34.16 Sin

'Without'. *Sin* raises few problems for the English speaker, except when it appears before an infinitive, in which case it sometimes cannot be translated by the English verb form in -ing: cf. *dos Coca-Colas sin abrir* 'two Coca-Colas, unopened' (or 'not opened'). See 28.2.4.

<i>No subas al tren sin billete</i>	Don't get on the train without a ticket
<i>Como vuelva a verte por aquí te echo sin contemplaciones</i>	If I see you around here again I'll throw you out on the spot (lit. 'without consideration for you')
<i>Fumaba sin cesar</i>	He was smoking ceaselessly
<i>Estoy sin blanca</i>	I haven't got a penny

¡Cuántos hay sin comer!

How many there are who have nothing to eat!

Está más guapa sin peinar

She's more attractive without her hair done

34.17 Sobre

This preposition combines some of the meanings of the English words 'on', 'over', 'on top of' and 'above'.

(a) As a preposition of place

It is an equivalent of *en* in the sense of 'on': *en/sobre la mesa* 'on the table', *en/sobre la pared* 'on the wall'. *Encima de* is also used of horizontal surfaces: *encima de la mesa* 'on (top of) the table'.

However, where 'on top of' is impossible in English *encima de* is impossible in Spanish: *Los hinchas se encuentran todavía en/sobre el terreno* 'The fans are still on the field/(British) 'pitch':

Querían edificar sobre estos terrenos un hotel nuevo

They wanted to build a new hotel on this land

Este neumático tiene poco agarre sobre mojado

This tyre has poor grip on wet surfaces

Los rebeldes marcharon sobre la capital

The rebels marched on the capital

El castillo está edificado sobre un pintoresco valle

The castle is built overlooking a picturesque valley

Una mujer habla con un chico y un árbol agita unas hojas secas sobre sus cabezas
(J. Cortázar, Argentina)

A woman is talking to a boy and a tree is waving a few dry leaves over their heads

Un sol de fuego caía sobre los campos

A fiery sun fell on the plains

Note

Compare *sobre*, *encima de* and *por encima de* in the following examples: *El rey está por encima de/sobre todos* (rest, not motion) 'The King is above everyone', *Mi jefe siempre está encima de mí* 'My boss is always breathing down my neck', *La bala pasó por encima de su cabeza, rozándole el pelo* (motion) 'The bullet passed over his head, just touching his hair', *El avión voló por encima de/sobre la ciudad* (motion: *sobre* implies height and is often more literary than *encima de*) 'The plane flew over the city'.

(b) Approximation (more usually with time)

Llegaremos sobre las cinco de la tarde

We'll arrive around 5 p.m.

Tenía sobre cuarenta años (. . .unos 40 años is more usual)

He was around forty years old

Costó sobre cien mil

It cost around 100,000

(unos/unas 100.000 is more usual)

(c) 'About'

In this sense, *sobre* implies formal discourse 'about', i.e. 'on the subject of' something. Informal discourse usually requires *de*, cf. *No he venido a hablar de tus problemas* 'I haven't come to talk about your problems' (not *sobre*):

Pronunció una conferencia sobre los problemas del Oriente Próximo

He delivered a lecture on the problems of the Near East

La OMS advierte sobre el peligro del uso de tranquilizantes sin receta médica

WHO (World Health Organization) warns on use of tranquilizers without medical prescription

(d) Centre of rotation

El mundo gira sobre su eje polar
Las puertas se mueven sobre bisagras
Dio media vuelta sobre el pie izquierdo

The world spins about its polar axis
 Doors turn on hinges
 He did a half-turn on his left foot

(e) Superiority or precedence 'over'

el triunfo de los conservadores sobre la izquierda
No tiene derecho a reclamar su superioridad sobre los demás
Sobre todo, quisiera agradecer a mi mujer . . .
El crecimiento, en términos reales, de las exportaciones en el primer mes de 1984 supera el 50% sobre enero de 1983 (El País)
impuestos sobre la renta

the victory of the conservatives over the left
 He has no right to claim superiority over others
 Above all, I would like to thank my wife . . .
 In real terms, the growth in exports in the first month of 1984 is 50% higher than January 1983
 taxes on income

34.18 Tras

'Behind', 'after'. It is a close equivalent of *detrás de* 'behind' (location) and *después de* 'after' (time); it is very rare in everyday speech. Its brevity makes it popular with journalists.

Tras de is an equally literary variant.

Dos siluetas deformes se destacaron tras el vidrio esmerilado (L. Goytisolo, Spain)
¿Quién sabe qué cosas pasan tras las cortinas de aquella casa?
un generoso proyecto tras el cual se esconden intenciones menos altruistas
Una banda de gaviotas venía tras el barco

Two distorted outlines loomed through/behind the frosted glass
 Who knows what things happen behind the curtains of that house?
 a generous project behind which less generous intentions lurk
 A flock of gulls was following the boat

Detrás de could be used in all the above examples.

Así, tras de los duros años de 1936 a 1939 . . . (popular press; después de possible)
Los cazadores denuncian "intereses políticos" tras las críticas de un grupo ecologista andaluz (El Mundo, Spain)
Tras de sus ojos se fue como imantado (M. de Unamuno, Spain)

So, after the hard years between 1936-1939 . . .
 Hunters denounce 'political interests' after criticisms by an Andalusian ecologist group
 He went off after her, drawn by her eyes, as though magnetized

Notes

(i) Occasionally *tras* is unavoidable: *Siguieron el mismo ritmo de trabajo, año tras año/día tras día* 'They followed the same work-pace, year after year/day after day', *Han puesto un detective tras sus pasos* 'They've put a detective after him/on his trail'.

(ii) Note also the following construction: *Tras de tener él la culpa, se enfada* (or *Encima de tener él . . .*) 'Not only is it his fault; he has the nerve to get angry'.

34.19 Prepositional phrases

The following is a list of common prepositional phrases. They can appear before nouns and, if their meaning is appropriate, before pronouns and infinitives:

<i>a base de</i>	based on/consisting of
<i>a bordo de</i>	on board
<i>a cambio de</i>	in exchange for
<i>a cargo de</i>	supervised by
<i>a causa de</i>	because of
<i>a costa de</i>	at the cost of
<i>a despecho de</i>	in spite of
<i>a diferencia de</i>	unlike
<i>a disposición de</i>	at the disposal of
<i>a distinción de</i>	unlike
<i>a espaldas de</i>	behind the back of
<i>a excepción de</i>	with the exception of
<i>a expensas de</i>	at the expense of
<i>a falta de</i>	for lack of/for want of
<i>a favor de</i>	in favour of
<i>a fin de</i>	with the aim of
<i>a finales/fines de</i>	towards the end of
<i>a flor de</i>	flush with/at . . . level (only used with <i>piel</i> 'skin', <i>agua</i> 'water', <i>tierra</i> 'ground')
<i>a fuerza de</i>	by dint of
<i>a guisa de</i> (literary)	= <i>a modo de</i>
<i>a gusto de</i>	to the taste of
<i>a juicio de</i>	in the opinion of
<i>a la sombra de</i>	in the shadow of
<i>a más de</i>	as well as . . .
<i>a mediados de</i>	towards the middle of
<i>a modo de</i>	in the manner of
<i>al nivel de</i>	at the level of
<i>a partir de</i>	starting from
<i>a pesar de</i>	despite
<i>a por</i>	see 34.14.4h
<i>a principios de</i>	towards the beginning of
<i>a prueba de</i>	-proof, eg. <i>a prueba de incendios</i> 'fire-proof'
<i>a punto de</i>	on the verge of
<i>a raíz de</i>	immediately after/as an immediate result of
<i>a razón de</i>	at the rate of
<i>a riesgo de</i>	at the risk of
<i>a sabiendas de</i>	with the knowledge of
<i>a través de</i>	through/across
<i>a vista de</i>	in the sight/presence of
<i>a voluntad de</i>	at the discretion of
<i>a vuelta de</i>	e.g. <i>a vuelta de correo</i> 'by return of post'
<i>además de</i>	as well as
<i>al alcance de</i>	within reach of
<i>al amor de</i>	in the warmth of (e.g. a fire)
<i>al cabo de</i>	at the end of
<i>al contrario de</i>	contrary to
<i>al corriente de</i>	<i>au fait</i> with/informed about
<i>al estilo de</i>	in the style of
<i>al frente de</i>	at the head/forefront of
<i>al lado de</i>	next to
<i>alrededor de</i>	around
<i>al tanto de</i>	= <i>al corriente de</i>
<i>a la hora de</i>	at the moment of/when it comes to . . .
<i>a la vera de</i> (literary)	= <i>al lado de</i>
<i>a lo largo de</i>	throughout/along
<i>bajo (la) condición de que</i>	on condition of

<i>bajo pena de</i>	on pain of
<i>cerca de</i>	near
<i>con arreglo a</i>	in accordance with
<i>con miras a</i>	bearing in mind/with a view to
<i>con motivo de</i>	on the occasion of (an anniversary, etc.)
<i>con objeto de</i>	with the object of
<i>con relación a</i>	in respect of/in relation to
<i>con respecto a</i>	with respect/reference to/in comparison to
<i>con rumbo a</i>	in the direction of (i.e. moving towards)
<i>con vistas a</i>	with a view to/bearing in mind
<i>de acuerdo con</i>	in accordance with
<i>de regreso a</i>	on returning to
<i>debajo de</i>	see 34.3, 31.6.6
<i>delante de</i>	see 34.2, 31.6.8
<i>dentro de</i>	see 31.6.5
<i>después de</i>	after (time); see 14.10.3
<i>detrás de</i>	behind; see 34.18, 31.6.7
<i>en atención a</i>	in consideration of
<i>en base a</i>	on the basis of (i.e. <i>sobre la base de</i>)
<i>en busca de</i>	in search of
<i>en caso de</i>	in case of
<i>en concepto de</i>	as/by way of e.g. <i>Este dinero es en concepto de ayuda</i> 'this money is by way of assistance'
<i>en contra de</i>	against
<i>en cuanto a</i>	as for . . . /concerning
<i>en forma de</i>	in the shape of
<i>en frente de</i>	opposite
<i>en honor de</i>	in honour of (but <i>en honor a la verdad</i> 'strictly speaking')
<i>en lugar de</i>	instead of (+ noun or pronoun)
<i>en medio de</i>	in the middle of
<i>en pos de</i> (literary)	in search of (also = <i>tras de</i>)
<i>en pro de</i> (literary)	= <i>a favor de</i>
<i>en torno a</i>	around (the subject of)/concerning
<i>en vez de</i>	instead of
<i>en vías de</i>	on the way to: <i>país en vías de desarrollo</i> 'developing country'
<i>en vísperas de</i>	on the eve of
<i>en vista de</i>	in view of
<i>encima de</i>	see 34.9 and 34.17
<i>fuera de</i>	see 31.6.5
<i>lejos de</i>	far from
<i>mas allá de</i>	beyond
<i>no obstante</i> (literary)	notwithstanding
<i>por causa de</i>	= <i>a causa de</i>
<i>por cuenta de</i>	= <i>a expensas de</i>
<i>por encima de</i>	over the head of/against the will of
<i>por parte de</i>	on the part of
<i>por razón de</i>	= <i>a causa de</i>
<i>sin embargo de</i> (literary)	notwithstanding
<i>so pena de</i> (literary)	= <i>bajo pena de</i>
<i>so pretexto de</i> (literary)	on the pretext of
<i>tras de</i>	see 34.18

35

Relative clauses and pronouns

35.1 General

35.1.1 Forms of relative pronouns

There are four relative pronouns in Spanish: *que*, *quien(es)*, *el que*, *el cual*.

El que and *el cual* agree in number and gender with their antecedent¹ and can therefore take the forms:

	singular	plural
<i>masc.</i>	<i>el que/el cual</i>	<i>los que/los cuales</i>
<i>fem.</i>	<i>la que/la cual</i>	<i>las que/las cuales</i>

The plural of *quien* is *quienes*, but it has no separate feminine form.

El que is used only after prepositions. Foreign students tend to over-use *el cual* and neglect the more frequent *el que* and *quien*. *El cual* tends nowadays to be confined to formal styles; it is discussed separately at 35.5.

Cuando, *donde* and *como* may also introduce relative clauses, e.g. *la calle dondelen la que la vi* 'the street I saw her in/where I saw her'. See 35.10-12 for discussion.

35.1.2 Restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses

This chapter occasionally refers to a distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive clauses.

Restrictive clauses limit the scope of their antecedent: *Las chicas que eran suizas se callaron* 'The girls who were Swiss stopped talking'. This refers only to those girls who were Swiss.

Non-restrictive clauses or appositive clauses do not limit the scope of their antecedent: *Las chicas, que/las cuales eran suizas, se callaron* 'The girls, who were Swiss, stopped talking'. This sentence clearly claims that all the girls are Swiss. In writing non-restrictive clauses are typically marked by a comma, and in speech by a pause.

A relative clause that refers to the whole of a unique entity is bound to be non-restrictive (note that English does not allow 'that' for 'which' in the following sentence): *La abadía de Westminster, que/la cual es uno de los monumentos más visitados por los turistas* 'Westminster Abbey, which is one of the monuments most visited by tourists'.

¹ The antecedent of a relative pronoun is the noun or pronoun that it refers to: in 'the dog that I bought', 'dog' is the antecedent of 'that'.

35.1.3 English and Spanish relative pronouns contrasted

Spanish relative clauses differ from English in four major respects:

(a) Prepositions must never be separated from a relative pronoun: 'the path (that/which) we were walking along' = *el camino por el que caminábamos*. Sentences like **el camino que caminábamos por*, occasionally heard in the Spanish of beginners, are almost unintelligible.

(b) A relative pronoun can never be omitted in Spanish: 'the plane I saw' = *el avión que (yo) vi*.

(c) English and French constantly replace relative pronouns by a gerund or participle form: 'a box containing two books' *une boîte contenant deux livres*. This is usually impossible in Spanish: *una caja que contiene/contenía dos libros*. The subject is discussed in detail at 20.3.

(d) Spanish does not allow a relative pronoun to be separated from its antecedent by a verb phrase. The type of sentence sporadically heard in English like 'The man doesn't exist whom I'd want to marry' (for 'The man (whom) I'd want to marry doesn't exist') cannot be translated by **El hombre no existe con el que yo quisiera casarme*. The correct translations are *No existe el hombre con el que yo quisiera casarme* or *El hombre con el que yo quisiera casarme no existe*. The first of these two translations is preferable, and this has important consequences for the word order of Spanish sentences containing relative clauses. See 37.2.1 for discussion.

Further examples: *Acudieron corriendo los vecinos, que/quienes/los cuales no pudieron hacer nada* 'The neighbours came running, but could do nothing' (literally, 'who could . . .') not **Los vecinos acudieron corriendo, que . . .*; *Han vuelto las cigüeñas que hicieron su nido en el campanario el año pasado* 'The storks that made their nest in the belfry last year have returned', not **Las cigüeñas han vuelto que . . .*

35.2 The relative pronoun *que*

Que is the most frequent relative pronoun and may be used in the vast majority of cases to translate the English relative pronouns 'who', 'whom', 'which' or 'that'.

However, there are certain cases in which *el que*, *quien* or *el cual* must be used. These are:

(a) In most cases after prepositions; see 35.4.

(b) *El cual* only: in contexts discussed at 35.5.

Examples of *que* as a relative pronoun:

*los inversionistas que se quemaron los dedos
las hojas que caían de las ramas*

the investors who burnt their fingers
the leaves (that were) falling from the
branches

*el libro que compré ayer
las enfermeras que despidieron el año pasado
(see 22.4.2 for use of personal *a* in this
type of sentence)*

the book (that) I bought yesterday
the nurses (that) they fired/sacked last
year

Note

The word *todo* requires the relative pronoun *el que*: *todos los que dicen eso . . .* 'all who say that/everyone who says that'.

35.3 Use of *que*, *quien*, *el cual* in non-restrictive relative clauses

When no preposition appears before the relative pronoun and the relative clause is **non-restrictive** (see 35.1.2 for definition), *que*, *quien* or *el cual* may be used. *Quien* is used for human beings, and *el cual* is emphatic and restricted to formal language:

Fueron a hablar con José, que/quien/el cual estaba de mal humor
Tres cajas de ropa que/las que/las cuales, no pudiendo olvidar a su difunto marido, se negaba a vender
el presidente, que/quien/el cual acababa de pronunciar un discurso

They went to talk to José, who was in a bad mood
 Three chests of clothes which, being unable to forget her late husband, she refused to sell
 the President, who had just delivered a speech

El cual is more likely to be used whenever the relative pronoun is separated from its antecedent or from the verb of which it is the subject or object. *El cual* is discussed further at 35.5.

Notes

(i) Only *que* can be used after personal pronouns: *Yo que me preocupo tanto por ti . . .* 'I who worry so much about you . . .', . . . *y ahora, hablando con ella, que tenía el sol de la tarde en el rostro* (F. Umbral, Spain) ' . . . and now, talking to her, who had the evening sun on her face'.

(ii) In 'cleft' sentences (discussed at 36.2) a nominalizer, e.g. *el que*, *quien*, must be used: *Fue María quien/la que dijo la verdad* 'It was Maria who told the truth', *Soy consciente de que tengo que ser yo misma la que/quien resuelva el problema* (female speaking) 'I'm aware that I must be the one to solve the problem myself'.

(iii) *El que* also translates 'the one who/which' and is discussed under nominalizers at 36.1: *Aquella chica es Charo – la que lleva el chándal rojo* 'That girl over there is Charo – the one wearing the red tracksuit'.

El que is rare as a subject relative pronoun, though the preceding construction is sometimes similar to a non-restrictive clause. Compare *Hacia el final de los debates, comenzó a perfilarse una cuarta opción, la que reclamaba un "nuevo concepto de un nacionalismo pluralista"* (*El País*) 'Towards the end of the discussions a fourth option began to take shape, one which demanded a "new concept of a pluralist nationalism"'.

35.4 Relative pronoun after prepositions

35.4.1 After prepositions *el que*, *quien* or *el cual* are used

When the relative pronoun is preceded by a preposition, *que* alone is used only in the circumstances discussed at 35.4.2.

The relative pronouns required are:

(a) Non-human antecedents: *el que* (or *el cual*).

(b) Human antecedents: *el que*, *quien* (or *el cual*). *Quien* is slightly more formal than *el que*.

Use of *el cual* is discussed separately at 35.5.

. . . *la misión a la que ha dedicado su vida*
 (J.L. Borges, Argentina)
la amenaza de guerra bajo la que vivimos
la maniobra en virtud de la que consiguió un
éxito inmerecido
la calle desde la que/donde he venido andando
 ¿. . . *y todas . . . ésas con quien has paseado*

. . . the mission to which he has dedicated his life
 the threat of war we're living under
 the manoeuvre whereby he gained an undeserved success
 the street I've walked from
 and what about all those . . . women

y . . . que has besado? (Buero Vallejo, Spain, dialogue; *quien* for *quienes* is popular style)

Yo era para ella . . . el ser supremo con el que se dialoga, el dios callado con quien creemos conversar (F. Umbral, Spain; both relative pronouns used)

Y sin llegar al extremo de un Lezama Lima, para quien todo es metáfora de todo . . . (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)
. . . la habían hecho sentir una seguridad de la que hasta entonces carecía (S. Pitól, Mexico)

Notes

(i) If the gender of a human antecedent is not known, *quien* (genderless) must be used: *No hay nadie con quien hablar* 'There's no one to talk to', *Busca a alguien de quien te puedas fiar* 'Look for someone you can trust'.

(ii) After neuter antecedents like *algo*, *nada* and *mucho*, *lo que* or *que* are used: *No hay nada con (lo) que puedas sacarle punta* 'There's nothing you can sharpen it with', *Iba a morir allí, no por algo en lo que creía, sino por respeto a su hermano mayor* (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru) 'He was going to die there, not for something he believed in, but out of respect for his elder brother'.

(iii) The use of personal *a* before relative pronouns is discussed at 22.4.2.

35.4.2 Relative pronoun *que* after a preposition

Que alone is preferred as a relative pronoun after prepositions in certain circumstances difficult to define.

(a) After *a* (when it is not personal *a*), after *con* and after *de* – unless the latter means 'from'. Use of *que* alone is especially common after abstract nouns:

la película a que me refiero
La discriminación a que están sometidas nuestras frutas y hortalizas . . . (El País)
La notoria buena fe con que Collazos expone sus dudas y sus convicciones (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)
Ese conjunto de sutiles atributos con que el alma se revela a través de la carne (E. Sábato, Argentina)
. . . la aspereza con que la trataba (S. Pitól, Mexico)
las especies de escarabajo de que estoy hablando
uno de los más serios percances de que se tiene noticia (El País)

the film I'm referring to
 The discrimination which our fruits and vegetables are subject to . . .
 The well-known good faith with which Collazos expounds his doubts and convictions
 That set of subtle attributes by which the soul reveals itself through the flesh
 the harshness with which he treated her
 the species of beetle I am talking about
 one of the most serious mishaps known (lit 'of which there is knowledge')

El que would be possible, though less elegant, in the foregoing examples.

(b) Frequently after *en* when precise spatial location is not intended. Compare *la caja en la que encontré la llave* 'the box I found the key in', but *la casa en que vivo* 'the house I live in', not *'the house **inside which** I live'.

En que is also preferred when the preceding noun is a period of time. After *día*, *semana*, *mes*, *año*, *momento* the *en* is also often omitted:

el desierto humano en que ella estaba perdida (F. Umbral)
Me gustaría vivir en un sitio en quel donde no hubiera coches

the human desert she was lost in
 I'd like to live in a place where there were no cars

<i>las formas racionales en que se basa la vida social</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)	the rational forms on which social life is based
<i>el momento político en que salía</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)	the political moment at which it appeared

In all the preceding examples *el que* is also possible, but not in the following:

<i>una noche en que iba a buscarla</i> (F. Umbral)	one night I went to fetch her
<i>el día que te vi</i>	the day I saw you
<i>El único día que se produjeron diferencias de importancia fue el jueves</i> (La Nación, Argentina, quoted in <i>Varietades</i> 124)	The only day on which any important differences were recorded was Thursday
<i>el año que nos casamos</i>	the year we got married
<i>el mes que llovió tanto</i>	the month it rained so much
<i>en los meses que estuvo Edwards en Cuba</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)	during the months Edwards spent in Cuba
<i>durante el año y medio que he estado en el cargo</i>	in the year and a half I've been in the job

Note

If the antecedent is precise as to the number of units of time, *el que* is used: *aquellos millones de años en los que el hombre aprendió a cazar y a servirse de sus herramientas* 'those millions of years in which man learned to hunt and use his tools', *Un tipo de genocidio que estará consumado dentro de treinta años, en los que las buenas intenciones de ciertas instituciones . . .* (A. Carpentier, Cuba) 'A type of genocide which will be complete within thirty years in which the good intentions of certain institutions . . . '.

35.5 *El cual*

In general *el cual* is more formal than *el que* or *quien*, and is yielding ground to them; foreigners spoil much good Spanish by overusing it. But it may be preferred or obligatory in the following contexts:

(a) After *según* when it means 'according to' rather than 'depending on' – as it does in —*¿Qué precio tienen?* —*Según los que quiera* ' "What's their price?" "It depends on which ones you want" ':

<i>el argumento según el cual . . .</i>	the argument according to which . . .
<i>José Carlos Mariátegui, según el cual "el marxismo leninismo es el sendero luminoso de la revolución"</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)	J. C. Mariátegui, according to whom 'Marxist Leninism is the shining path to revolution'

(b) It is often preferred after long prepositions, i.e. of more than one syllable, e.g. *para*, *contra*, *entre*, *mediante*, and after prepositional phrases, e.g. *a pesar de* 'despite', *debajo de* 'underneath', *delante de* 'in front of', *frente a* 'opposite', *en virtud de* 'by reason of', etc. However, *el que* is increasingly common even in these contexts.

El cual is also especially favoured when the antecedent is separated from the relative pronoun by intervening words, or when the relative is separated from its verb:

<i>. . . una formación profesional mediante la cual los funcionarios de grado medio estén capacitados para . . .</i> (<i>Cambio</i> 16, Spain)	professional training whereby middle-grade civil servants will be equipped to . . .
<i>Hay cuerpos, seres, con atmósfera propia, dentro de la cual es bueno vivir</i> (F. Umbral, Spain)	There are bodies, beings, with their own atmosphere, within which it is good to live

Hay chequetrenes con los que usted puede viajar por un valor de 15.000 a 20.000 pesetas, pero por los cuales usted sólo paga 12.750 y 17.000 ptas respectivamente (Advertisement: *el cual* separated from its antecedent)

There are 'Traincheques' with which you can travel to a value of 15-20,000 pesetas, but for which you only pay 12,750 and 17,000 pesetas respectively

But note *El otro fue alcanzado por ocho balazos, a consecuencia de los que moriría minutos más tarde . . .* (*El País*) 'The other one received eight bullet wounds, as a consequence of which he was to die a few minutes later', . . . *la localización de la abadía, sobre la que Adso evita toda referencia concreta* (Umberto Eco, translated by R. Pochtar) '. . . the location of the abbey, about which Adso avoids all specific reference'.

(c) *El cual* is used after *algunos de . . .*, *todos . . .*, *la mayoría de . . .*, *parte de . . .* and similar phrases:

los jóvenes españoles, la mayoría de los cuales son partidarios del divorcio
. . . árboles, pocos de los cuales tenían hojas
. . . defender la revolución social, parte integrante de la cual era la emancipación de la mujer
Corren por Madrid muchos rumores, algunos de los cuales vamos a recoger aquí

young Spaniards, the majority of whom are in favour of divorce
 trees, few of which had leaves
 to defend the social revolution, of which an integral part was the emancipation of woman
 Many rumours are circulating in Madrid, some of which we shall report here

(d) As the subject of a verb, *el cual* seems to be obligatory after a heavy pause such as a sentence break – a construction not easily imitated in English and not particularly common in Spanish:

Fueron a hablar con su tío, un setentón de bigote blanco y acento andaluz, que hacía alarde de ideas muy avanzadas. El cual, tras un largo silencio, contestó . . .

They went to talk with his uncle, a seventy-year old with a white moustache and Andalusian accent who boasted very advanced ideas. Who, after a long silence, replied . . .

35.6 Lo cual and lo que

These are used when the relative pronoun refers not to a noun or pronoun but to a whole sentence or to an idea, which, being neither masculine nor feminine in gender, require a neuter pronoun. Since the clause is always non-restrictive, *lo cual* is common, especially in writing. Compare: *Trajo una lista de cifras que explicaba su inquietud* 'He brought a list of figures which (i.e. the list) explained his anxiety' and *Trajo una lista de cifras, lo cual/lo que explicaba su inquietud* 'He brought a list of figures, which (i.e. the fact he brought it) explained his anxiety'. Further examples:

En un primer momento se anunció que los misiles eran americanos, lo cual fue desmentido en Washington (*El País*)
Llegué tarde, por lo que/lo cual no pude asistir a la reunión
El año siguiente fue la exaltación de Amadeo de Saboya al trono de España, lo cual le tuvo vagando por Madrid hasta altas horas de la madrugada (J.M. Guelbenzu, Spain)

Initially it was stated that the missiles were American, which was denied in Washington
 I arrived late, for which reason I couldn't attend the meeting
 The following year there occurred the elevation of Amadeo of Savoy to the Spanish throne, which had him wandering round Madrid until the small hours

35.7 Cuyo

This translates 'whose', and is often an elegant alternative for an otherwise tortuous relative clause. It agrees in number and gender with the following noun. If there is more than one noun, it agrees only with the first: *una mujer cuyas manos y pies estaban quemados por el sol* 'a woman whose hands and feet had been burnt by the sun', *una señora cuyo sombrero y guantes eran de seda* 'a lady whose hat and gloves were made of silk':

<i>aquellos verbos cuyo subjuntivo es irregular</i>	those verbs whose subjunctive is irregular
<i>un hombre de cuya honradez no dudo</i>	a man whose honesty I don't doubt
<i>una medida cuyos efectos son imprevisibles</i>	a measure whose effects are unforeseeable

Notes

(i) Grammarians condemn such commonly heard sentences as *?Se alojó en el Imperial, en cuyo hotel había conocido a su primera mujer* 'He stayed in the Imperial, in which hotel he had met his first wife', better . . . *el Imperial, hotel donde había conocido a su primera mujer*. But this construction is allowed with *caso*: *Nos han alertado acerca de la posibilidad de que todos los hoteles estén completos, en cuyo caso la reunión será aplazada* 'They have warned us of the possibility that all the hotels may be full, in which case the meeting will be postponed'.

(ii) *Del que/de quien* occasionally replace *cuyo*: *un torero, de quien alabó el tesón y el valor a toda prueba* 'a bullfighter, whose indefatigable steadfastness and courage he praised'.

(iii) *Cuyo* is rare in spontaneous speech and virtually unheard in popular styles. See 35.8c for a discussion.

(iv) *Cuyo* is not used in questions (except in some local Latin-American dialects): *?De quién es esa mochila?* 'Whose rucksack is that?', not **?Cuya mochila es ésa?*.

35.8 Relative clauses in familiar speech

Students will encounter a number of popular or familiar constructions that should probably be left to native speakers.

(a) There is a colloquial tendency, which may sometimes sound uneducated, to insert a redundant pronoun in relative clauses:

<i>Los gramáticos aconsejan muchas cosas que nadie las dice</i> (overheard)	Grammarians recommend many things that no one says
<i>Sólo por ti dejaría para siempre a don Memo, a quien tanto le debo</i> (C. Fuentes, Mexico, dialogue)	Only for you would I leave Don Memo for ever. I owe him so much

(b) Popular and relaxed informal speech often avoids combining prepositions and relative pronouns by using a type of construction banned from writing:

<i>?en casa de una mujer que yo vivía con ella . . . (con la que yo vivía)</i>	in the house of a woman I was living with
<i>?Te acuerdas del hotel que estuvimos el año pasado? (. . . en el que estuvimos . . .)</i>	Do you remember the hotel we stayed in last year?
<i>?Soy un emigrante que siempre me han preocupado los problemas de la emigración (. . . al que siempre han preocupado los problemas)</i> (Reader's letter in <i>El País</i>)	I am an emigrant who has always been concerned with the problems of emigration

This construction is not uncommon in Golden-Age texts, but it should not be imitated by foreign learners.

(c) *Cuyo* is avoided in spontaneous speech. There are many correct alternatives, e.g. *las mujeres cuyo marido las ayuda en casa* 'women whose husbands help them in the house' can be re-cast as *las mujeres que tienen un marido que las ayuda en casa*. However, popular speech often uses a construction called *quesuismo* which is stigmatized as illiterate:

<i>?los alumnos que sus notas no están en la lista (cuyas notas no están . . .)</i>	the students whose marks aren't on the list
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35.9 Cartas a contestar . . . , etc.

The following construction is nowadays very common in journalism, official documents or business letters:

<i>un libro y una tesis a tomar muy en serio por estudiosos y ciudadanos en general . . . (Cambio16, Spain, for que deben ser tomados en serio . . .)</i>	a book and a thesis to be taken very seriously by students and citizens in general
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For a discussion of this controversial construction see 18.12.

35.10 Donde, adonde, en donde as relatives

Donde is commonly used as a relative, especially after *hacia*, *a* (in the meaning of 'towards'), *desde*, *de* meaning 'from', *por* meaning 'along'/'through', *en* meaning 'place in', etc.

As a relative its use is rather wider than the English 'where':

<i>Lo recogí en la calle donde te vi</i>	I picked it up in the street where I saw you
<i>Añoraba las playas donde se había paseado durante aquel verano</i>	He longed for the beaches where he had strolled that summer
<i>Ése/Ese es el baúl de donde sacó los papeles</i>	That's the trunk from which he took the papers
<i>la ciudad hacia donde avanzaban las tropas enemigas . . .</i>	the city towards which enemy troops were advancing . . .
<i>un balcón desde donde se podía ver el desfile</i>	a balcony from which/where one could see the parade

In all the above restrictive clauses, *el que* or *el cual* could be used with the appropriate preposition. However, in the following non-restrictive clause only *donde* is possible:

<i>Volvieron a encontrarse en París, donde se habían conocido veinte años antes</i>	They met again in Paris, where they had met for the first time twenty years before
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Notes

(i) *Adonde* is not the same as *a dónde*. The former is a relative, the latter is found in direct or indirect questions and is always written as two words: *el pueblo adonde yo iba* (relative) 'the village I was going to', *No quería decirle a dónde iba yo* (indirect question) 'I didn't want to tell him where I was going', *¿(A) dónde va usted?* 'Where are you going?'

(ii) *En donde* is spatially more specific than *donde*, and is rather literary: *Hay una tienda pequeña en Westwood en donde venden infinidad de camisetas con letreros increíbles* (C. Rico-Goody, Spain) 'There's a little shop/store in Westwood where they sell a vast

range of T-shirts with fantastic things written on them'. . . . *Westwood donde venden* would have come to the same thing.

(iii) *Donde* is sometimes used colloquially in Mexico (and possibly elsewhere in northern Latin America) to mean an apprehensive 'what if . . . ?'. In this context Peninsular Spanish uses *anda que si* + indicative or *anda que como* + subjunctive: *No digas, estoy muy espantada, donde a la pobre criatura le salga la nariz de este hombre* (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue; Spain *anda que como le salga . . .*) 'Don't even mention it, I'm really terrified. What if this poor little thing gets this man's nose?!', *No sé cómo se van a casar. Donde estén igual de ignorantes en lo demás* (idem, Spain *Anda que como estén . . .*, *Anda que si están . . .*) 'I don't know how they're going to get married. What if they're just as ignorant about all the other things?!'.

35.11 Como as a relative

Como is officially recommended after *la manera* and *el modo*, although *en que* is used after *forma*, and usually after the other two as well:

La manera como un país se fortalece y desarrolla su cultura es abriendo sus puertas y ventanas (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)
Me gusta la manera como/en que lo hace
Me gusta la forma en que lo hace

The way a country strengthens and develops its culture is by opening its doors and windows
 I like the way he does it
 I like the way he does it

Notes

(i) *En que* is more usual in informal language.

(ii) *Mismo* plus a noun requires *que*: *Lo dijo del mismo modo que lo dijo antes* 'He said it the same way as he said it before', *Llevas la misma falda que yo* 'You're wearing the same skirt as me'.

35.12 Cuando as a relative

Cuando occurs only in non-restrictive clauses:

En agosto, cuando les den las vacaciones a los niños, nos iremos al campo

In August, when the children have their holidays/vacation, we'll go to the countryside

incluso en nuestros días, cuando nadie cree ya en las hadas

even in our day, when no one believes in fairies any more

But: *Sólo puedo salir los días (en) que no trabajo* (restrictive) 'I can only go out on the days I'm not working'.

Notes

(i) *Cuando* is used with *apenas*, *aún*, *entonces*, *justo*, *no*, *no bien*: *Apenas había aparcado el coche cuando se acercó un policía* 'He had hardly parked the car when a policeman came up', *Aún/Todavía no había empezado a estudiar cuando le dieron un empleo* 'He hadn't yet started studying when they gave him a job', *Empezó entonces, cuando los demás todavía no habían llegado* 'He began then, when the others hadn't yet arrived'.

Compare the following restrictive clauses: *en un momento en que . . .* 'at a moment when . . .', *en una época en que . . .* 'in a period when . . .', *en un año en que . . .* 'in a year when . . .', etc.

(ii) *Que* is used in the following phrases: *ahora que usted sabe la verdad* 'now (that) you know the truth', *luego que haya terminado* 'as soon as he's finished', *siempre que haya bastante* 'as long as there's enough', *cada vez que me mira* 'whenever he looks at me', *de modo que/de manera que . . .* 'so that . . .'.

In 'cleft' sentences *donde*, *como* or *cuando* may be obligatory and *que* disallowed (especially in Peninsular Spanish): *Es así como hay que hacerlo* 'This is how it must

be done', *Fue entonces cuando lo notó* 'It was then that he noticed it'. See 36.2 for discussion.

35.13 Relative clauses after a nominalizer

A nominalizer (e.g. *el que* meaning 'the one who/which') cannot be followed by the relatives *el que* or *el cual*. The noun must be repeated or, in written language, *aquel* is used:

Se imagina un nuevo don Julián, una versión moderna de aquel al que rinde homenaje el título del libro (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru; not **el al que . . .*)

Traiga otro plato – no me gusta comer en los platos en los que otros han comido (spoken language)

He imagines a new Don Julian, a modern version of the one to whom the book's title pays homage

Bring another plate – I don't like eating off those others have eaten off

35.14 Miscellaneous examples of relative clauses

Falta saber las condiciones en que está

Falta saber en qué condiciones está
Falta saber en las condiciones que está según el cine a que vayas según al cine que vayas

(All examples from M. Moliner.)

Era la habitación más pequeña en (la) que jamás he estado

Era la habitación más pequeña de todas las que he estado (familiar spoken language)

¿Cómo se explica el fenómeno singular que fue la victoria de los liberales?
el espectáculo conmovedor que son las ruinas de Machu Picchu

We have yet to know what conditions he is in

" "

" "

depending on what cinema you go to

It was the smallest room I've ever been in

It was the smallest room I've ever been in

How does one explain the singular phenomenon of the liberals' victory?
the moving spectacle of the Machu Picchu ruins

36

Nominalizers and cleft sentences

36.1 Nominalizers

36.1.1 General

A marked feature of Spanish is the use of the article to create noun phrases from words that are not themselves nouns: *rojo* 'red', *el rojo* 'the red one'; *explotado* 'exploited', *las explotadas* 'exploited women', etc. See 4.1d for discussion.

This device may be applied to possessive adjective/pronouns, e.g. *mío* 'mine', *el mío* 'my one'/'the one belonging to me': see 8.4 for discussion.

36.1 discusses an important type of nominalizer, *el de*, *lo de*, *el que*, *lo que* and *quien* used as pronouns with such values as 'the one from', 'the one belonging to . . .', 'the one who/that . . .', 'the person who . . .', etc., cf. French *celui de*, *celui qui*, *celle qui*, *ceux qui*, *ce qui*, etc. Some grammars treat these under relative pronouns, but they are in fact devices for turning a verbal or prepositional phrase into a noun phrase: *los que interrogan* is close in meaning to *los interrogadores* 'the interrogators', *los de antes* to *los anteriores* 'the previous ones', *el quelquien habla catalán* to *el hablante de catalán* 'the Catalan-speaker', etc.

36.2 Discusses 'cleft' sentences, e.g. *Fue aquí donde la vi* 'It was here that I saw her', a type of sentence that presents a number of difficulties not found in English or French.

For the use of *el que* and *quien* as relative pronouns, (*El hombre con el que/con quien hablaba*, *La mesa en la que escribo*) see Chapter 35, especially 35.3 and 35.4. For *quién* in questions, see 24.5.

36.1.2 *El de*

'The one(s) belonging to', 'that/those of', 'the one(s) from', etc. Its use in Spanish avoids repetition of the noun – as in the tragedy example below. It agrees in number and gender with the noun it replaces:

*Entre los problemas de España y los de
Estados Unidos, creo que los de los EE.UU
son más graves
Los de Buenos Aires son mejores
los de siempre
La de los refugiados es la gran tragedia de
nuestro siglo (El País)
Su rostro era el de un marino griego actual
(M. Vázquez Montalbán, Spain)*

Between the problems of Spain and
(those of) the USA, I think the USA's are
more serious
The ones from Buenos Aires are better
the same ones as always
The tragedy of the refugees is the great
tragedy of our century
His face was that of a present-day Greek
sailor

Translation by a Saxon genitive or compound noun is sometimes appropriate:

<i>Quita los de ayer y pon los de la semana pasada</i>	Take away yesterday's and put last week's
<i>Tenía los ojos saltones como los de una rana la industria del petróleo y la del carbón</i>	He had bulging eyes like a frog's the oil and coal industries
<i>Lo he hecho para aumentar la moral, sobre todo la de los escritores (J.M. Lara, El País)</i>	I've done it to raise morale, especially writers' morale

Note

La de can mean 'the amount of'/'how many': *No sé la de temas que tengo apuntados* (C. Martín Gaité, Spain) 'I don't know how many topics I've got jotted down'. See also 3.2.30.

36.1.3 Lo de

The neuter version of the above phrases. Like all neuter pronouns, its use is obligatory if there is no noun to which it can refer. *Lo de* has limited applications.

It is a common equivalent of 'the . . . business/affair' in such phrases as *lo del dinero perdido* 'the affair of the lost money':

<i>Se puso enferma por lo de su hijo</i>	She fell ill/(US) 'sick' because of the business of her son
<i>Siempre está a vueltas con lo de que cuándo nos vamos a casar</i>	(S)he's always coming back with the issue of when we're going to get married
<i>La primera vez que vi a Andrés furioso . . . fue cuando lo de la plaza de toros (A. Mastretta, México; for the prepositional use of cuando see 24.8)</i>	The first time I saw Andrés furious was at the time of the bullring business
<i>De lo de la abuela poco les debe quedar (C. Martín Gaité, Spain)</i>	They must have very little left of grandma's/of what belongs to grandma

Note

It is common in Argentina and other parts of Latin America in the meaning *en casa de* 'at . . . 's house': *en lo de Ángel* 'at Ángel's place'.

36.1.4 El que

This translates 'the one(s) who/which', 'that/those which', etc., (French *celui/celle/celles/ceux qui*). It agrees in number and gender with the noun it replaces:

<i>La que está fuera</i>	The one (fem.) who/that is outside
<i>El que llegó ayer</i>	The one (masc.) that arrived yesterday
<i>Los que dicen eso</i>	The ones/those (masc.) who say that
<i>Vivo en la que está pintada de blanco</i>	I live in the one (i.e. <i>la casa</i>) painted white
<i>Me atraían las que le tuvieron cariño, las que incluso le parieron hijos (A. Mastretta, Mexico)</i>	I felt attracted towards those who were fond of him, even towards those who had given him children
<i>La que fue considerada doctrina alternativa (El País)</i>	That which was considered the alternative doctrine

Notes

(i) *El de* and *el que* can be combined: *La libertad de la televisión debería ser siempre la del que la contempla . . . no la del que la programa (El País)* 'Freedom in television should always belong to the person watching it . . . not to the person programming it'.

(ii) For *el que* (invariable) + subjunctive meaning 'the fact that' (*el hecho de que*), see 16.10.1.

(iii) *La que* is often used in humorous warnings: *No sabes la que te espera* 'You don't know what's waiting for you', *¡La que te tienen preparada!* 'What they've got in store for you!'

36.1.5 Lo que

The neuter version of the above: it refers to no specific noun. It can normally be translated by the phrase ‘the thing that . . .’ or by the pronoun ‘what’ (cf. French *ce qui/ce que*):

*Lo que más me irrita es . . .
Se asombró de lo que dijo el portavoz*

What most irritates me is that . . .
He was amazed at what the spokesman said

La valla se prolonga todo lo que da de sí la vista

The fence stretches as far as the eye can see

Le pasa lo que a ti

The same thing happens to him as to you

Octavia, un hombre es lo que siente

Octavia, a man is what he feels

(A. Bryce Echenique, Peru, dialogue)

. . . tuvo bien acordarse de un chiste tras otro en lo que quedó de cena (A. Mastretta, México)

. . . he was obliging enough to remember joke after joke during what was left of dinner

Compare: *Por Rosario fue por la que se pelearon* ‘Rosario was **the woman** they fought over’ and *Por Rosario fue por lo que se pelearon* ‘Rosario was **what** they fought over’.

36.1.6 Quien as an equivalent of ‘the one who’

Quien/quienes can optionally replace *el que* in many contexts provided it refers to a human being. Since *quien* is not marked for gender it is not an exact equivalent of *el que* and must be used when reference to a specific gender is to be avoided. Only *quien* is possible in the meaning of ‘no one’:

*El que diga eso es un cobarde
Quien diga eso es un cobarde
Quienes/Los que no estén de acuerdo, que se vayan*

The person who says that is a coward (same, but rather literary)
Anyone not in agreement should go

*Que se lo diga al que la quien quiera
Quien no es mala persona es el sargento*

Let him tell whomever he likes
Someone who’s not a bad fellow is the sergeant

El coronel no tiene quien le escriba (G. García Márquez, title, *el que* impossible here)

The colonel has no one to write to him

Tú no eres quien para decirme eso (colloquial, *el que* impossible)
como quien espera heredar una fortuna

You’re no one to tell me that
like someone hoping to inherit a fortune

Note

Since it is indeterminate, *quien/quienes* cannot be used when the identity or sex of the person referred to is known and stressed: *Le/Lo vimos con la que vive al lado* (**Le/Lo vimos con quien vive al lado* = *‘We saw him with whoever lives next door’) ‘We saw him with the girl who lives next door’.

36.2 ‘Cleft’ sentences

36.2.1 General

A number of the examples given in 36.1 are in fact ‘cleft’ sentences. These are sentences in which an object, predicate or adverbial phrase is isolated and focused by using ‘to be’. This can be done in one of two ways:

Simple sentence

The fire started here

Cleft sentence

It was here that the fire started
Here was where the fire started

John said it

I cut it with this knife

It was John who said it

John was the one who said it

It was this knife I cut it with

This knife is the one I cut it with

The structure of such sentences differs in Spanish from its French and English counterparts, and there are important differences between Peninsular and Latin-American usage with regard to cleft sentences containing a preposition.

36.2.2 'She is the one who . . .', etc.

English speakers, especially those who know French, are tempted to join this type of cleft sentence by the particle *que*, but only a nominalizer (*el que* or *quien*) can be used:

Es este coche el que compré
*Este coche es el que compré (not *Es este*
coche que compré)

Fue esa chica la que/quien lo hizo

Esa chica fue la que/quien lo hizo

Fue usted el que/quien lo dijo

Usted fue el que/quien lo dijo

Esto es lo que más rabia me da

Lo que más rabia me da es esto

porque nunca es ella, doña Pilar, la que
aporta el dinero (interview in Cambio16,
Spain)

El pelaje overo es el que prefieren los ángeles
(J.L. Borges, Argentina)

Para entonces será la guerra mundial la que
haya solucionado todo (Cambio16, Spain)

Fue probablemente su intuición la que le llevó
a seguir aquella línea de conducta (S. Pitól,
Mexico)

This car's the one I bought

It's this car I bought

That girl is the one who did it

It's that girl who did it

It was you (masc.) who said it

You were the one who said it

This is what makes me most furious

" "

because it's never Doña Pilar who brings
 in the money

Lamb's fleece is the one that angels
 prefer

By then it'll be world war that will have
 solved everything

It was probably his intuition that made
 him follow that line of behaviour

36.2.3 Cleft sentences involving prepositions

If the first half of the cleft sentence contains a preposition, the preposition must normally be repeated in the second half, i.e. Spanish says 'It's with her **with whom** you must speak', *Es con ella con la que/con quien tienes que hablar*.

A major difference exists here between European and Latin-American Spanish. American Spanish, especially spoken but also informal written, regularly uses *que* alone in a way similar to French or English 'that'. This 'Gallicism' is vehemently rejected by many native Spaniards (although it is heard increasingly among younger generations of Spaniards):

Sp. *Es desde esta ventana desde donde se ve*
el mar

Lat.Am. *Es desde esta ventana que se ve el*
mar

Desde esta ventana es desde donde se ve el
mar (avoided in Lat. Am.?)

Sp. *Fue por este motivo por el que decidió*
cambiar de empleo

Lat.Am. *Fue por este motivo que*
decidió . . .

It's from this window that you can see
 the sea

This balcony is where you can see the
 sea from

It was for this reason that he decided to
 change jobs

<p>... pero es con la Maga que hablo (J. Cortázar, Argentina, dialogue; Spain ... con la <i>quelquien</i> hablo) No fue por Pepita sino por Teresa por la <i>quelquien</i> se pelearon (Spain) Es por eso que en el lenguaje deportivo abundan las hipérbolas (El Litoral, Argentina, Spain por eso es por lo que . . .) Es también por eso por lo que se traiciona a cualquiera (J. Mariás, Spain) No fue por el champagne que vine aquí día tras día (S. Pitol, Mexico, Spain por lo que)</p>	<p>... but it's Maga I'm talking to It wasn't Pepita but Teresa they fought over That's why hyperboles abound in sporting language That's also why one betrays anyone It wasn't because of the champagne that I came here day after day</p>
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Clauses of time, place or manner require *cuando*, *donde* and *como* respectively, although Latin Americans may use *que*, especially in informal speech:

<p>Sp. Fue aquí <i>donde</i> ocurrió Lat.Am. Fue aquí <i>que</i> ocurrió Sp./Lat.Am. Aquí fue <i>donde</i> ocurrió Es en esta última novela donde se enfrentan los más verídicos tipos clericales trazados por Galdós (Insula, Spain) Fue en Pueblo Nuevo que supimos que el novio de Petra no había vuelto más al pueblo (G. Cabrera Infante, Cuban dialogue; Spain <i>donde</i>) La chica se acuerda de que es ahí que está la guarida del brujo (M. Puig, Argentina, dialogue, Spain <i>donde</i>) Fue en casa de ella que tuvo lugar aquel encuentro con Vallejos (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru, Spain <i>donde</i>) Sp. Es así como hay que hacerlo Lat.Am. Es así que hay que hacerlo Sp./Lat.Am. Así es como hay que hacerlo Fue entonces cuando, podríamos decir, comenzó la historia del automóvil (El País, Spain) Naturalmente tenía que ser en ese momento ... que sonara el timbre (J. Cortázar, Argentina, Spain <i>cuando</i>)</p>	<p>It was here that it happened It is in this last novel where the most lifelike clerical figures drawn by Galdós confront one another It was in Pueblo Nuevo that we found out that Petra's boyfriend had never returned to the village The girl remembers that there is where the wizard's lair is It was in her house that this meeting with Vallejos took place It's this way that you have to do it " " " " It was then, we might say, that the story of the car began Of course it had to be at that moment ... that the bell rang</p>
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Notes

(i) Care is required with cleft sentences involving *lo que*. The neuter pronoun must be retained, cf. *Lo que me sorprende es su timidez/Es su timidez lo que me sorprende* 'What surprises me is his/her/your shyness', *Es la inseguridad lo que le/lo hace reaccionar de esa forma* 'It's insecurity that makes him react like that' (i.e. 'what makes him react thus is insecurity'), *Ha hecho cine, teatro, televisión, pero es con la canción con lo que le gustaría triunfar* (Cambio16, Spain) 'He has worked in cinema, theatre and TV, but it is in singing that he would like to make a hit', *Era un traje negro lo que llevaba* 'It was a black suit that he was wearing' (answers question 'What was he wearing?'), but *El que llevaba era el traje negro* 'The one he was wearing was the black suit' (answer to 'Which suit was he wearing?').

(ii) English makes the verb 'to be' singular when it is shifted to the head of a cleft sentence: 'The mosquitoes are what annoys him'/'It's the mosquitoes that annoy him'. *Ser* normally remains plural in such cleft sentences: *Tenían que ser los partidos*

socialistas quienes/los que implementaran esta política de austeridad 'It had to be the socialist parties which implemented this austerity policy', *Son los mosquitos lo que me irrita* 'The mosquitoes are what annoys me', *Lo que me irrita son los mosquitos* 'What annoys me is the mosquitoes'. See 2.3.3. for discussion.

(iii) Cleft sentences involving lengthy prepositional phrases may be connected by *que* in Latin-American usage but are likely to be avoided by careful Peninsular speakers: *?Fue bajo esta impresión que continuamos con el programa* (Spain *Fue así, bajo esta impresión, como continuamos con el programa*) 'It was under this impression that we carried on with the programme', *teniendo en cuenta que es gracias al número de parados que podemos mantener la inflación a nivel europeo* (Triunfo, Spain, Argentine writer) 'bearing in mind that it is thanks to the number of unemployed that we are able to keep inflation at European levels', *Fue a causa de eso que lo hizo* (Latin American) or *Lo hizo a causa de eso* or *Fue a causa de eso por lo que lo hizo* 'It was because of that that he did it'.

(iv) The complexities of cleft sentences can of course be avoided altogether by not using *ser*: *Por eso te digo, Desde esta ventana se ve el mar, Se pelearon por Pepita, no por Teresa.*

(v) The use of *quien* for things was once normal in Spanish and still survives although it should not be imitated: *No fueron las máquinas quienes desencadenaron el poder capitalista, sino el capitalismo financiero quien sometió la industria a su poderío* (E. Sábato, Argentina) 'It wasn't machines that unleashed capitalist power, but finance capitalism which subjected industry to their domination'.

36.2.4 Translating 'that's why'

Porque means 'because' and it cannot be used to translate sentences like 'She's got the flu, **that's why** she didn't come to work'. A construction with *por* is called for: *Está con gripe, por eso no ha venido al trabajo:*

<i>Por eso lo hice</i>	That's why I did it
<i>Fue por eso por lo que no te llamé antes</i>	That's why I didn't ring before
<i>Fue por eso que no te llamé antes</i> (Lat.-Am. equivalent)	" "
<i>Ésa/Esa es la razón por la que no lo compré</i>	That's the reason why I didn't buy it

36.2.5 Agreement in cleft sentences

The view of María Moliner, confirmed by native informants, is that in the singular either *Tú fuiste el que le/lo mataste* or *Tú fuiste el que le/lo mató* 'You're the one who killed him' is correct, but strict agreement seems to be the only possible construction in the plural: *Vosotros fuisteis los que le/lo matasteis* 'You were the ones who killed him'. Further examples:

<i>Yo fui la que me lo bebí</i>	I was the woman who drank it
<i>Yo fui la que se lo bebió</i>	
<i>El que lo sé soy yo</i>	I'm the one (masc.) who knows
<i>El que lo sabe soy yo</i>	
<i>Somos los únicos que no tenemos ni un centavo para apostar</i> (G. García Márquez, Colombia, dialogue)	We're the only ones who haven't got a centavo to bet
<i>Vosotros sois los que lo sabéis</i>	You're the ones who know
<i>Ellos son los que trabajan más</i>	They're the ones who work hardest

Note this sentence in which both agreements occur: *Vos sos el que no me aguanta. Vos sos el que no aguantás a Rocamadour* (J. Cortázar, Argentina, dialogue; Spain *tú eres* for *vos sos*, *aguantas* for *aguantás*), 'You're the one who can't stand me. You're the one who can't stand Rocamadour'.

37

Word order

37.1 General

Compared with English and French, word order in Spanish is free. Many adjectives may be placed before or after the noun that they modify: *en el pasado remoto/en el remoto pasado* 'in the remote past'; see 4.11 for discussion. A subject may follow or precede a verb: *Juan lo sabe/Lo sabe Juan* 'Juan knows' (different emphasis). A direct object noun phrase may follow or precede the verb: *No tengo hambre/Hambre no tengo* 'I'm not hungry' (different emphasis). As in English, adverbs and adverb phrases may occupy various positions in relation to the verb that they modify: *Normalmente lo hace/Lo hace normalmente* 'Normally he does it'/'He does it normally', *A veces llueve/Llueve a veces* 'Sometimes it rains'/'It rains sometimes'.

Usually the factors that call for a particular word order depend on considerations of style, context, emphasis and rhythm of the sort that few non-natives are sensitive to. In this respect word order can be as complex a question in Spanish as intonation and sentence stress are in English.

Sections 37.2-37.4 deal with patterns of word order that can be explained in terms of more or less clearly definable rules. Section 37.5 considers the more difficult questions of word order that depend on matters of context, emphasis, intonation and style.

This chapter presumes that SV (Subject-Verb) order, e.g. *Mario viene* 'Mario's coming', and SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) order, e.g. *Juan come una manzana* 'John is eating an apple' are 'normal' and that other arrangements of Verb, Subject and Object are departures from the norm.

It is worth repeating that we are here discussing only late twentieth-century Spanish. In texts from earlier periods word order is typically much freer than today.

37.2 General rules of word order

37.2.1 VS (Verb-Subject) order in sentences containing relative clauses

The two principles explained here account for one of the most commonly encountered differences between Spanish and English as far as the position of the verb in relation to its Subject is concerned.

(a) When a sentence includes a relative clause, VS order is very often preferred in the main clause to ensure that the relative pronoun is not separated from its antecedent by a verb phrase:

Lo compró un señor que estuvo en Venezuela
A man who visited Venezuela bought it

and not **Un señor lo compró que estuvo en Venezuela*

The latter incorrect sentence breaks the strong rule (also discussed at 35.1.3d) that a verb phrase (*lo compró*) cannot come between a noun phrase (*un señor*) and a relative pronoun that refers to it (*que*). Another example:

No existe todavía el coche que yo quiera comprar
The car that I want to buy doesn't exist yet

not **El coche no existe todavía que yo quiera comprar*
?The car doesn't exist yet that I want to buy

The second sentence is not Spanish and probably not English either.

In both cases, another more recognisably English order is also possible, but it is usually less elegant in Spanish, especially when the verb is separated from its subject by a long string of words:

Un señor que estuvo en Venezuela lo compró
A gentleman who was in Venezuela bought it

El coche que yo quiero comprar no existe todavía
The car that I want to buy doesn't exist yet

Further examples: *Me llamó un amigo con el que fui de vacaciones* (better than *Un amigo con el que fui de vacaciones me llamó*). *Me llama una chica que se llama América* (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain, dialogue; better than *Una chica que se llama América me llama*) 'A girl called América rings me'.

(b) VS order is also strongly favoured in the relative clause to keep the verb close to the relative pronoun. Spanish dislikes sentences structured like 'That's the dog that my friend from Kansas City **bought**', best translated *Ese/Ése es el perro que compró mi amigo de Kansas City*, not ?*Ese/Ése es el perro que mi amigo de Kansas City compró*. Further examples:

Estas acciones han rendido más que las que compró tu madre
... *el carnaval de invierno que organiza el Departamento de Turismo* (*El Mercurio*, Chile, in *Varietades*, 182)

These shares have yielded more than the ones your mother bought
the Winter Carnival that the Department of Tourism is organizing

When these two rules are combined, sentences are produced whose word order differs markedly from their English equivalents: *Gana la que eligen los jueces* 'The girl/woman whom the judges select wins', literally: 'Wins the one whom elect the judges'.

Further examples of inversion in both main and relative clauses:

Así dice la carta que nos envió tu padre

That's what's in the letter your father sent (lit. 'Thus says the letter that sent your father')

Son innumerables las dificultades que plantea la lucha contra el terrorismo (*La Vanguardia*, Spain)

The difficulties posed by the struggle against terrorism are innumerable

Durante toda mi vida, ahí donde hubiese un duro, ahí estaba yo (interview in *Cambio16*, Spain)

Throughout my life, wherever you could find five pesetas you'd find me (lit. '... wherever there was a five-peseta coin, there was I')

However, set verb phrases like *tratar de*, *tener que*, are not divided unnaturally. *Solía detenerse a hablar con ella en la aldea abrasada por la sal del Caribe donde su madre había tratado de enterrarla en vida* (G. García Márquez, Colombia; rather than . . . *donde había tratado su madre de enterrarla en vida*) 'He used to stop to talk to her in the village, parched by the salt from the Caribbean, where her mother had tried to bury her alive', [*Las maestras*] *no tienen la culpa: si no existiera la maldita instrucción primaria que ellas tienen que aplicar . . .* (J. Cortázar, Argentina; rather than *que tienen ellas que aplicar*) '[The school mistresses] aren't to blame: if the wretched primary education they have to administer didn't exist . . .'.

37.2.2 Word order in questions (direct and indirect)

(a) VS (Verb-Subject) order is required when a question word opens the sentence. VS order is also required in indirect questions in the clause following the question word. Question words are:

<i>¿cómo?/¿qué tal?</i>	how?	<i>¿dónde?</i>	where?
<i>¿cuál (de)?</i>	which (of)?	<i>¿por/para qué?</i>	why?
<i>¿cuándo?</i>	when?	<i>¿qué?</i>	what?/which? (see note i)
<i>¿cuánto?</i>	how much?/how many?	<i>¿a quién?</i>	whom?

Examples (subject in bold):

<i>¿Cómo va una a estar esperando y delgada?</i> (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)	How is one going to be expecting a baby and (be) thin?
<i>¿Qué tal va tu nuevo trabajo?</i>	How's your new job going?
<i>¿Cuál de los collares prefiere tu novia?</i>	Which of the necklaces does your girlfriend prefer?
<i>¿A quién arrestó la policía?</i>	Whom did the police arrest?
<i>No sé cuándo llegan los demás</i> <i>Todo el mundo se pregunta por qué no se levanta Ricardo más temprano (less likely . . . Ricardo no se levanta más temprano)</i>	I don't know when the rest are arriving Everyone's wondering why Richard doesn't get up earlier
<i>No recuerdo dónde vive tu hermano</i>	I don't remember where your brother lives
<i>No me imagino qué pensaría tu mujer de todo esto</i>	I can't imagine what your wife would think about all this

As the examples show, a direct object precedes the verb as in English:

<i>¿Qué consejos me das?</i>	What advice do you give me?
<i>¿Cuántas naranjas has comido?</i>	How many oranges have you eaten?

Verb-Object (VO) order can occasionally be used colloquially to express shock or incredulity:

<i>¿Has comido cuántos?</i> (more usually)	You've eaten <i>how many</i> ?
<i>¿Cuántos dices que has comido?</i>	

When the sentence contains an object and a separate subject there are three possibilities:

(a) When the object is shorter than the subject, VOS order is usual; (b) when the subject noun phrase is shorter, VSO order is preferred; (c) when subject and object are of equal length, either order may be used (object in bold):

<i>¿Dónde compran drogas los adolescentes?</i> (short object)	Where do young people buy drugs?
---	----------------------------------

*¿Dónde compran los adolescentes **las drogas vendidas por los narcotraficantes**?* (long object)

Where do young people buy the drugs sold by drug-pushers?

*¿Dónde compra **pan** mamá?/¿Dónde compra mamá **pan**?* (equal length)

Where does Mother buy bread?

Further examples (object in bold):

*¿A quién ha escrito **la carta** tu amigo Federico?* (short object)

To whom did your friend Federico write the letter?/Who did your friend Federico write the letter to?

*¿Por qué ha tenido **tan mala prensa** Antena 3 en su primer año de emisiones?* (Cambio16, Spain) (short object)

Why has Antenna Three had such a bad press during its first year of broadcasting?

*¿Cómo ha afectado la guerra a **su empresa**?*² (short subject)

How has the war affected your company?

*¿Cuándo va a incluir su revista **programas y artículos dedicados a ordenadores tales como los ya citados**?* (long object; reader's letter in *El Ordenador Personal*, Spain³)

When is your magazine going to include programs and articles devoted to computers like the ones mentioned above?

*¿Cuándo piensan hacerlo **ustedes**?/¿Cuándo piensan **ustedes** hacerlo?* (equal length)

When are you thinking of doing it?

Notes

(i) A noun phrase introduced by *¿qué?* meaning 'which?' or by *¿cuál de?* 'which?' always appears before the verb:⁴ *¿Qué programas han gustado más al público?* 'Which programmes⁵ have pleased the public most?', *¿Cuál de los aviones consume menos combustible?* 'Which of the planes uses least fuel?', *¿Qué frutas ha comprado Inés?* 'What fruits did Inés buy?', *¿Cuál de los proyectos ha aceptado el comité?* 'Which of the projects has the committee accepted?'

(ii) Cuban Spanish is unusual in optionally retaining SV order after question words (subject in bold): *¿Cómo **usted** conoció que Tony tenía negocio de narcotráfico?* (*Vindicación de Cuba*; standard Spanish . . . *se enteró **usted** de que . . .*) 'How did you find out that Tony had a drug-peddling business?', *¿En qué fecha **usted** ingresó en la Corporación CIMEX?* (*ibid.*, standard Spanish *ingresó **usted***) 'On what date did you join the CIMEX Corporation?'

37.2.3 Word order in questions that do not contain a question word

When no question word appears, SVO order can be used, in which case question marks or, in speech, interrogative (rising) intonation are the only things that show that a question is intended:

¿Mamá ha comprado leche? (or *¿Ha comprado mamá leche?*)

Has mother bought any milk?

¿Tú también notaste lo bonito que se ríe? (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)

Did you also notice how prettily she laughs?

² However, spontaneous speech is less careful about sentence balance and might produce a sentence like *¿Cómo ha afectado la guerra ésta tan terrible que tenemos a su empresa?* 'How has this terrible war we're having affected your company?'

³ The usual Latin-American word for computer is *la computadora*.

⁴ In many Latin-American varieties of Spanish, *cuál* alone before a noun can mean 'which?': *¿cuál programa?*, *¿cuáles frutas?*, etc. This usage is not normal in Spain. See 24.3.3 for discussion.

⁵ US spelling 'programs'.

¿El XIII [decimotercer] Congreso va a ser el de la desaparición de su partido? (interview with Communist leader in *Tribuna*, Spain)

Is the 13th Congress going to be the one at which your party disappears?

However, in such sentences VS order is usual if there is no object: *¿Ha llamado mamá?* 'Has mother called?'. If the sentence includes an object, VOS order is usual if the object is shorter than the subject (object in bold): *¿Ha traído flores el vecino de tu suegra?* 'Has your mother-in-law's neighbour brought flowers?'. But if the object is longer than the subject, VSO order is usual; and if they are of the same length, the order is optional (object in bold): *¿Ha traído Miguel las flores que encargamos ayer por la noche?* (short subject, so not **¿Ha traído las flores que encargamos anoche Miguel?*) 'Has Miguel brought the flowers we ordered last night?'; but *¿Ha traído flores Miguel?* / *¿Ha traído Miguel flores?* (same length) 'Has Miguel brought (some) flowers?'.

37.2.4 Word order in exclamations

When one of the words listed at 37.2.2 introduces exclamation (O)VS order is required:

¡Qué guapo es tu hermano!

Isn't your brother good-looking/My, your brother's good-looking!

¡Cómo se parece Ana a su madre!

Doesn't Anna look like her mother!/Anna really looks like her mother!

¡Cuántos piropos te echa el jefe!

What a lot of flirtatious comments the boss makes to you!

37.2.5 Inversion in tags

VS order is required in writing in tags of the sort 'Mary said', 'John replied' when they follow the words quoted. Inversion in this case is nowadays optional in English and is disappearing:

—*Está bien, dijo el presidente*

'Fine', the President said/said the President

—*Lo dudo, contestó Armando*

'I doubt it', Armando replied/replied Armando

37.2.6 Verb-Subject order required after adverbs

VS is very common when certain adverbs and adverbial phrases precede the verb.

When the verb is intransitive, inversion is usual. Speakers of either language would probably prefer sentences (a) to (b) (subject in bold):

- (a) *Delante de ella se levantaba un enorme edificio*
Before her stood an enormous building

Delante de ella aparecieron dos hombres chillando y gesticulando
Before her there appeared two men screaming and gesticulating

- (b) *Delante de ella un enorme edificio se levantaba*
?Before her an enormous building stood

?*Delante de ella dos hombres chillando y gesticulando aparecieron*
?Before her two men screaming and gesticulating appeared

When the verb has an object it seems that either word order is possible in Spanish (subject in bold):

*Delante de ella **dos mujeres** voceaban sus mercancías*
*Delante de ella voceaban sus mercancías **dos mujeres***
 Before her two women were calling out their wares

In the following examples, SV order is not always impossible, but it is usually awkward (subject in bold).⁶

<i>Siempre me dijeron las brujas y echadoras de cartas que mi número mágico era el tres</i> (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain)	The witches and card-readers always told me that my magic number was three
<i>Siempre fue altanera la Sofia</i> ⁷ (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)	Sofia was always haughty/arrogant
<i>Nunca me hablaban los vecinos</i> <i>Apenas salían sus padres, ponía música rock</i>	The neighbours never spoke to me He used to put on rock music as soon as his parents went out
<i>También decía su madre que . . .</i>	His mother also said that . . .
<i>Bien saben las autoridades que . . .</i>	The authorities know very well that . . .
<i>Así dice Platón</i>	This is what Plato says
<i>Todavía humeaban algunos incendios</i>	Some fires were still smoking
<i>Ya me habían explicado mis amigos todos los detalles</i> ⁸	My friends had already explained all the details to me
<i>Solamente pueden usarse las iniciales de la víctima en este tipo de caso</i>	Only the victim's initials may be used in this type of case
<i>Para tales personas existen las cárceles</i>	Prisons exist for such people

Adverbial phrases of place especially favour VS order (subject in bold):

<i>Aquí vivo yo</i>	That's where I live
<i>Aquí dejó la sangre el muerto</i> (J. Ibarguengoitia, Mexico, dialogue)	The dead man left his blood here
<i>En su mirada veía yo con claridad que me estaba pasando de la raya</i> (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain)	I could see clearly by his expression (lit. 'in his gaze') that I was overdoing it
<i>Junto a la puerta colgaba una deshilachada toalla</i> (L. Sepúlveda, Chile)	Next to the door hung a frayed towel

See 37.4 for further remarks about the position of adverbial phrases.

⁶ It is difficult to be precise on this matter. Native speakers who have an ear for sentence structure will know when SV order sounds right: *Nunca los intereses publicitarios motivarán la publicación de un artículo o suplemento* (Libro de estilo de El País) 'The publication of an article or supplement will never be motivated by publicity interests', rather than *Nunca motivarán los intereses publicitarios . . .*

⁷ See 3.2.21 for remarks on the use of the definite article with personal names.

⁸ SVO order after *ya* has a particularly Mexican ring to it: *Ya él había cumplido diez años cuando mataron al alemán* (S. Pitol, Mexico) 'He was already ten when they killed the German', . . . *que ya el general se robó a la compañera de Marta* (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue) ' . . . because the General has already stolen Marta's partner' (*robarse* = *robar* in Spain). *Ya* frequently introduces ill-tempered imperatives in Mexican: *¡Ya crezcan, idiotas!* 'Grow up, you idiots!'

37.3 Miscellaneous word order rules

This section includes a number of miscellaneous but important rules that explain various features of Spanish word order.

37.3.1 The link between a preposition and the word it modifies

Spanish does not usually separate prepositions from the noun or pronoun that they modify. This rule is absolute in relative clauses: a typically English sentence like 'That's the hotel we're going to' must be expressed *Ese/Ése es el hotel al que vamos* 'That's the hotel to which we're going'.

In general, only *no* should separate a preposition from its infinitive:

*Su nombramiento se demoró por estar siempre la vacante ocupada (not *por la vacante estar)*
*La promesa de una vida de ocio fue frustrada al negarse el Fisco a devolverle el dinero (not *al Fisco negarse)*
Se equivocó por no haber pensado antes

His appointment (to the post) was delayed because the vacant position was always occupied
 The promise of a life of leisure was frustrated when the Revenue Department refused to return the money to him
 He went wrong as a result of not thinking beforehand

37.3.2 Set phrases are not broken up

Set phrases, particularly set verbal phrases like *tener que* 'to have to', *llevar a cabo* 'to carry out', *hacer público* 'to make public', *surtir efecto* 'to produce an effect', *tener lugar* 'to take place', *darse cuenta de que* 'to realize', should not be broken up by the insertion of other words:

*Probablemente las obras se llevarán a cabo para febrero (not *se llevarán probablemente a cabo . . .)*
Por eso hacemos pública esta información (and not the typical English word order ? . . . hacemos esta información pública)

The work will probably be carried out by February

This is why we are making this information public

37.3.3 No insertion of words between *haber* and participles

As a rule, words should not be inserted between *haber* and a participle, e.g. *siempre he dicho* or *he dicho siempre* 'I've always said', but not **he siempre dicho* (students of French take note: *J'ai presque toujours pensé que* is *Casi siempre he pensado que* or *He pensado casi siempre que*).

This rule is occasionally broken with certain words; see 14.8.1 for discussion.

37.3.4 Unstressed object pronouns remain with their verb

Unstressed object pronouns (*me, te, se, la, lo, le, nos, os, los, las, les*) are never separated from their verb: *Te lo diré luego* 'I'll tell you later', *Sólo te quiero a ti* 'I only love you'/'I love only you', etc.

There are often optional positions when a finite verb governs an infinitive: *No debí decírtelo* or *No te lo debí decir*. This is discussed at 11.14.4.

37.3.5 Adjectival phrases are kept close to the noun they modify

Spanish does not like to separate adjectival phrases from the noun they modify:

Regresó como a las seis y media con un ejemplar arrugado y manchado de huevo de las Últimas Noticias del mediodía (C. Fuentes, Mexico)

He returned around 6.30 with a crumpled and egg-stained copy of the mid-day *Últimas Noticias*

This sentence would sound awkward (at least in polished styles) if the adjectival phrase were put at the end: ? . . . *con un ejemplar de las Últimas Noticias del mediodía arrugado y manchado de huevo*.

However, compound nouns formed with *de* are not broken up. One says *un reloj de pared suizo* 'a Swiss wall-clock', not **un reloj suizo de pared*. There is no infallible way in this case of determining whether nouns connected by *de* are inseparable compounds or not. The subject is discussed further at 4.11.5.

37.3.6 Keep verbs close to their subject

VS order is commonly used to avoid separating a subject from its verb. Spanish does not like to leave a verb dangling at the end of a clause or sentence far from its subject. Compare the English and Spanish versions of this sentence:

El tratamiento debe repetirse durante toda la vida, salvo que se realice con éxito un trasplante de riñón (Ercilla, Chile, in *Varietades*, 220; rather than . . . *un trasplante de riñón se realice con éxito*)

The treatment must be repeated throughout [the patient's] life, unless a kidney transplant is successfully performed

37.3.7 Numbers are usually avoided at the beginning of sentences

See the note to 10.16 for discussion.

37.4 Position of adverbials

37.4.1 Adverbials are kept close to the words they modify

Generally speaking, adverbials (i.e. adverbs, adverbial phrases and adverbial clauses) are placed either immediately before or, more usually, immediately after the word(s) that they modify.

In this respect, *El País* (*Libro de estilo*, p.134) specifically admonishes its journalists and editors against:

(a) separating adverbs from their verb: *El Rey ha inaugurado hoy . . .* 'The King today inaugurated . . .', not *Hoy, el Rey ha inaugurado . . .*;

(b) breaking up verbal phrases by inserting adverbs in them: *El presidente está dispuesto claramente a dimitir* 'The president is clearly prepared to resign', not *El presidente está claramente dispuesto a dimitir* (which is the usual English order and, despite *El País*, very common in Spanish);

(c) beginning articles with an adverb other than *sólo/solo* or *solamente*, on the grounds that since adverbs modify other phrases the latter should precede them.

37.4.2 Adverbials not left at the end of sentences

English differs from Spanish in that it regularly puts adverbials at the end of the sentence: 'I saw that lady who lives next door to your grandmother yesterday'. For the reason given at 37.4.1, Spanish puts 'yesterday' close to

'saw': *Vi ayer/Ayer vi a esa señora que vive al lado de tu abuela.* If the *ayer* ended the sentence it would seem to modify *vive*.

The Spanish requirement that adverbs should stay close to their verb therefore often produces the unEnglish order Verb-Adverbial-Object (adverbial in bold):

*Besó **fervorosamente** la mano de su anfitriona*

He kissed his hostess's hand fervently

*El tribunal fijará **discrecionalmente** la duración de la fianza* (Spanish legal dictionary)

The Court will fix the period of the bail bond at its discretion

*. . . casi siempre **a la una** seguía en chanclas y bata* (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue; in Spain *chanclas* = *zapatillas*)

. . . she was nearly always still in her slippers and dressing-gown/(US) 'bathrobe' at one o'clock

Adverbials of time are very often put before adverbials of place: 'We went to grandma's house yesterday' = *Fuimos ayer a casa de la abuela.*

Note particularly the position of the adverbials in bold in the following sentences (other orders are possible but are not shown here):

*Fue inútil que los párrocos advirtieran **en los pueblos** a las mujeres que sus maridos las abandonarían si llegaba la ley del divorcio* (Cambio16, Spain)

It was no use the parish priests in the villages warning women that their husbands would leave them if the divorce law was introduced

*Parece que la habilidad más importante es la de memorizar información para **luego** escupirla en un examen* (Spanish popular press)

It seems the most important skill is memorizing information in order to churn (lit. 'spit') it out later in an examination

*Alguien dijo que uno de esos desventurados había huido a Mysore, donde había pintado **en un palacio** la figura del tigre* (J.L. Borges, Argentina)

Someone said that one of those unfortunates had fled to Mysore, where he had painted the figure of the tiger in a palace

*Me di cuenta de que había estado **antes** en aquel sitio*

I realized I'd been in that place before

*Siempre has creído que **en el viejo centro de la ciudad** no vive nadie* (C. Fuentes, Mexico)

You've always believed that no one lives in the old city centre

For further remarks about the position of adverbs see 37.2.6 and 31.3.8.

37.5 Word order not explainable by sentence structure

Even when all the foregoing more or less codifiable rules are taken into account, there are cases in which word order is determined not so much by the structure of the sentence as by much less easily definable factors of context, style, emphasis and rhythm.

It is never easy to explain these factors in a grammar book, which necessarily quotes fragments of language out of context. The following remarks by no means exhaust the subject, which cannot be covered in every detail in a book of this nature.

37.5.1 The most important information usually comes first

The information that is foremost or most urgent in the speaker's mind tends to come first in the sentence. This is especially true of emotive colloquial

language, and in this respect English word order (especially British) is more rigid than Spanish:

<i>¡De dinero no quiero volver a oír ni una palabra!</i>	About <i>money</i> I don't want to hear another word!
<i>Americano vino uno solamente</i> (Cuban TV interview)	As for Americans, only one came
<i>Como en la foto de la boda no creo que yo vuelva a estar</i>	I don't think I'll be like I was in the wedding photo again
— <i>Lléveme adentro de una de esas casas . . .</i>	'Take me inside one of those houses . . .'
— <i>Casas fueron antes, ahora son oficinas</i> (M. Puig, Argentina, dialogue; Peninsular usage requires <i>dentro de . . .</i>)	'They used to be houses, now they're offices'
<i>Lo que yo digo es que la culpa quien la tiene es el Gobierno</i>	What I say is that the one to blame is the Government
<i>Muchas cosas he leído, pocas he vivido</i> (J.L. Borges, Argentina)	I've read many things but lived few

Notes

(i) When a direct object is placed before the verb, it is resumed or echoed by a pronoun: *Al verano inglés debían llamarlo estación de las lluvias* 'The English summer ought to be called the rainy season'. This rule is not applied to nouns that are not preceded by an article or demonstrative adjective. See 11.16.1 for more details.

(ii) One of the functions of the passive with *ser* is to focus attention on the direct object by putting it at the head of the sentence: *Miguel fue atropellado por un coche* 'Miguel was run over by a car' is more likely than *Un coche atropelló a Miguel* 'A car ran over Miguel', Miguel being more important than the car.

Informal Spanish generally avoids the passive with *ser*, so placing the direct object at the head of the sentence is a good way of producing the same effect as a passive: *A Miguel lo/le atropelló un coche*.

(iii) Latin-American headline writers exploit the fact that in emotive language the most significant information comes first: *A tres coches quemaron* (Colombian headline) 'Three cars burnt', *Ingeniero buscamos* (advertisement, Venezuela) 'Engineer sought', *Causa de deslizamiento verán expertos* (*El Comercio*, Lima) 'Experts to investigate cause of landslide', *Capturan la policía y el ejército a 23 miembros de Sendero Luminoso* (*UnomásUno*, Mexico) 'Police and Army capture 23 Members of "Shining Path" '9. This word order sounds odd to Spaniards.

37.5.2 *El profesor viene or Viene el profesor?*

This section discusses sentences consisting only of a subject and verb.

The principle explained at 37.5.1 – that the most important information tends to come first in a sentence – explains the difference between *Antonio viene* and *Viene Antonio*, 'Antonio's coming', two sentences that can really only be differentiated by emphasis and intonation in English.

In a neutral statement in which neither subject nor verb is emphasized, Subject-Verb order is usual (when none of the factors listed in 37.2-37.4 operates): *El médico llega a las diez* 'The doctor arrives at ten o'clock'. If the verb is the most important or urgent information, for example when the doctor's arrival is feared, unexpected or impatiently awaited, Verb-Subject order is appropriate: *¡Viene el médico!* 'The doctor's coming!'

But this is an obvious example. In most cases departures from Subject-Verb order – which are not, in fact, nowadays very common in written language except when produced by the factors mentioned earlier in the chapter – are

⁹ A Peruvian left-wing terrorist organization.

determined by factors of style and rhythm that cannot easily be explained in abstract terms.

When it is not clearly called for, VS order may produce a heavily literary, even 'Academic' tone: *Recordará el lector que los complementos directos . . .* (Royal Academy, *Esbozo . . .* 3.7.3f) 'The reader will recall that direct objects . . .', where the order *El lector recordará que . . .* would have been less formal.

In plain styles, VS order is sometimes dictated by considerations of rhythm and phrase length, Spanish preferring to put the verb before an unusually long subject: *Con la firma del tratado **Start en Moscú el 31 de julio termina la carrera de armamentos de la guerra fría*** (*Tribuna*, Spain, subject in bold) 'With the signing of the Start Treaty in Moscow on 31 July, the Cold War arms race ends'.

Very often, the choice between SV and VS is optional (subject in bold): *Me siento en una mesa porque me revienta **hacer barra***/Me siento en una mesa porque *hacer barra me revienta* (Spain, colloquial) 'I sit at a table because I hate standing at the bar' (lit 'doing bar irritates me'). Here the difference is very slight, though SV order would have been unnatural had the subject been longer).

In the following examples, SV order is preferred either because the subject is focussed as the most important or urgent element, or because no element in the sentence is particularly focussed (subject in bold):

<i>Miguel está leyendo</i> (answers the question 'What's Miguel doing?')	Miguel's reading
<i>Bentley se volvió</i>	Bentley turned round
<i>De repente, Horacio aulló</i>	Suddenly Horace howled

In the following sentences, the verb is focussed as the most important or urgent element (subject in bold):

<i>Ha muerto Franco</i> (headline)	Franco is dead
<i>Han vuelto a España ya muchos</i>	Many have returned to Spain already
<i>Se abrió la puerta y entró Juan</i>	The door opened and John came in

37.5.3 Word order in sentences that include direct objects

A sentence consisting of a subject, verb and direct object theoretically appear in Spanish in the following forms:

(a) <i>Inés leyó el libro</i>	SVO
(b) <i>El libro lo leyó Inés</i>	O (redundant pronoun) VS
(c) <i>El libro Inés lo leyó</i>	OS (redundant pronoun) V
(d) <i>(Inés el libro leyó</i>	SOV)
(e) <i>Leyó Inés el libro</i>	VSO
(f) <i>Leyó el libro Inés</i>	VOS

Of these possibilities, only the first three are at all common in everyday language. (d) is very unnatural and might occur in songs or comic verse, and (e) and (f) are only found in questions or archaic or very flowery literary styles.

(a) is a neutral word order corresponding to an English sentence spoken with equal stress on 'Inés' and 'book'. Since, in neutral sentences, the subject of the verb tends naturally to be the most important element, SVO order is normal.

(b) focusses the object as the most significant information in the sentence, cf. 'as for the book, Inés read it'. See 11.16.1 for the use of the redundant pronoun here.

(c) is not particularly common. It also focusses the object of the verb and might occur in contrasts such as *La moto mi marido la compró el año pasado y el coche hace una semana* '(As for the) motor cycle, my husband bought it last year, and the car (he bought) last week'.

38

Diminutive, augmentative and pejorative suffixes

38.1 General

There are numerous suffixes that add an emotional tone to a word, e.g. *-ito*, *-illo*, *-ón*, *-ote*, *-azo*, *-aco*, *-ejo*, etc.

The effect of these suffixes is very unpredictable. Sometimes they simply create new words without any emotional colouring at all: compare *ventana* 'window', *ventanilla* 'window of a vehicle', *la caja* 'box', *el cajón* 'drawer' (in furniture). These words are standard lexical items and must be learnt separately.

Very often they add an emotional tone to a word or phrase, e.g. affection, endearment, contempt, irony, repugnance, and they may sound affected, effeminate, childish or too familiar if used inappropriately. Consequently, foreign learners are advised not to experiment with them since inexpert use may produce unfortunate effects: *Estarías mejor con el pelo recogido* means 'You'd look better with your hair up', *Estarías mejor con el pelo recogidito* means the same, but sounds either painfully condescending or like an adult talking to a little girl; *?Estarías mejor con el pelito recogidito* is ludicrous and would be said by no one.

In view of this and the fact that the forms and frequency of the suffixes differ widely from continent to continent and region to region, the following account is very summary. For a detailed picture of Peninsular usage see Gooch (1974), from which some of the following examples are taken.

38.2 Diminutive suffixes

Diminutive suffixes have various uses, described at 38.2.1-38.2.5.

Although these suffixes do not always imply smallness, a word must be said about their relationship with the adjective *pequeño*.

Pequeño means 'small', but it does not usually have the emotional overtones of the English word 'little'. It is generally only used between an article and a noun when applied to abstract nouns, in which case it means 'of little importance': *el/un pequeño problema* 'a small/slight problem', *la/una pequeña dificultad* 'a slight difficulty'. In other cases the combination of *el/un* + *pequeño* + noun is more idiomatically expressed by diminutive suffixes. One says not *?el/un pequeño perro* but *el/un perrito* 'a little dog', not *?la/una pequeña casa* but *la/una casita* 'a little house': c.f. . . . *desde la primera vez que la vio leyendo bajo los árboles del parquécito* (G. García Márquez, Colombia) ' . . . since the first time he had seen her reading under the trees in the little park'.

Due to the influence of English and French, use of *pequeño* with the nuances of 'little' is spreading in journalese, but literary and spoken usage still prefers to add a diminutive suffix to convey all the overtones of 'little', French *petit/petite*.

Pequeño follows the noun when it refers to size or age without affective overtones e.g. *un árbol pequeño* 'a small tree', *un niño pequeño* 'a young child'. In Spain a little child is often affectionately called *el chiquitín*, *el nene*, *el pequeño* or even *el peque*.

Note

Sometimes abbreviations are used instead of suffixes, e.g. *mami* or *papi* for *mamá* or *papá*, which are in turn abbreviations for *madre* and *padre*; *cole* from *colegio* 'school', *tele* from *televisión*.

38.2.1 Formation of the diminutive

The following are found, *-ito* being the most common in Central Spain and *-illo* used especially in the South. *-ico*, *-iño* and *-ín* have a regional flavour:

Usual form		Variants	
-ito	-cito	-ecito	-ececito
-illo	-cillo	-ecillo	-ececillo
-ico	-cico	-ecico	-ececico
-uelo	-zuelo	-zuelo	-ecezuelo
-ete	-cete	-ecete	
-ín			
-iño			

All are marked for gender in the usual way: a final vowel is replaced by *-a*; *-ín* makes its feminine *-ina*.

The following remarks apply to typical educated usage in Central Spain and probably to educated usage in many places, but they should be checked against the speech habits of different Latin-American republics.

Words of more than one syllable ending in *-n*, *-ol* or *-r*, and words ending in accented *-e* or having the diphthong *-ie* in their first syllable, usually take the form in *-c-*. The following formations were generated spontaneously by Peninsular informants, but not all are guaranteed to be in common use. It must be emphasized that diminutive suffixes are theoretically very productive and could conceivably be added to almost any noun:

<i>surtidor</i>	spout/fountain	<i>surtidorcito</i>
<i>mujer</i>	woman	<i>mujercita</i>
<i>mejor</i>	better	<i>mejorcito</i>
<i>mayor</i>	bigger	<i>mayorcito</i>
<i>charlatán</i>	talkative	<i>charlatancito</i>
<i>cajón</i>	drawer	<i>cajoncito</i>
<i>madre</i>	mother	<i>madrecita</i>
<i>padre</i>	father	<i>padrecito</i>
<i>cofre</i>	case/box	<i>cofrecito</i>
<i>puente</i>	bridge	<i>puentecito</i>
<i>nieto</i>	grandson	<i>nietecito</i>
<i>piedra</i>	stone	<i>piedrecita</i>

But note *el café* > *cafetito* 'coffee'; *el cafecito* usually means 'a little café'; also *el alfiler* > *alfilerito* 'pin'.

Words of one syllable commonly take forms in *-ec-*:

<i>flor</i>	flower	<i>florecita</i>
<i>pan</i>	bread	<i>panecillo</i> (i.e. 'bread roll')
<i>pez</i>	fish	<i>pececito/pececillo</i>
<i>tos</i>	cough	<i>tosecita/tosecilla</i>
<i>pie</i>	foot	<i>piececito</i> (? <i>piececillo</i> – if it is ever used)
<i>voz</i>	voice	<i>vocecita</i>
<i>sol</i>	sun	<i>solecito/solito</i>

Words ending in an unaccented vowel or diphthong lose their final vowel, but if the vowel is accented it may be preserved and its accent transferred to the *i* of *-ito*:

<i>armario</i>	wardrobe	<i>armarito</i>
<i>estatua</i>	statue	<i>estatuilla</i>
<i>silla</i>	chair	<i>sillita</i>
<i>mamá</i>	mummy	<i>mamaíta</i> or <i>mamita</i>
<i>papá</i>	daddy	<i>papaíta</i> or <i>papito</i>

38.2.2 Uses of the diminutive suffix *-ito*

The main effects of this suffix are:

(a) To give a friendly tone to a statement:

This very common use of the diminutive may simply give a warm tone to a remark. In a bakery one might say *Dame una barrita de pan* 'Give me a loaf of bread', which is merely a cheery equivalent of *Dame una barra de pan*. This use of the diminutive does not imply smallness but merely signals the speaker's attitude to the hearer:

<i>Dame un paquetito por ahora</i>	Give me just one packet for now
<i>Me tiras el vaso con el codo. A ver si tenemos más cuidadito . . .</i>	You're knocking my glass over with your elbow. Let's see if we can't have a little bit more care . . .
<i>Voy a echar una siestecita</i>	I'm going to have forty winks/a quick nap
<i>Un momentito, por favor</i>	Just a moment, please
<i>Me lo contó un pajarito</i>	A little birdy told me
<i>¿Alguna cosita más? (often used in shops)</i>	Would you like anything else?
<i>(¿Alguna cosa más?)</i>	(Anything else?)

(b) To modify the meaning of adjectives and adverbs by adding a warm tone or, sometimes, by making them more precise, e.g. *ahora* 'now', *ahorita* (Mexican colloquial) 'right now':

<i>cerquita de la catedral</i>	just by the cathedral
<i>Ahora mismo se lo sirvo</i>	Don't worry, I'll bring it at once
<i>Ya eres mayorcito</i>	You're a big boy now
(<i>mayor</i> = grown up, older)	
<i>Está gordito</i>	He's put on a bit of weight
(<i>Está gordo</i>)	he's fat)
<i>¡tontito!</i>	silly!
(<i>¡tonto!</i>)	stupid!)

'Nice' or 'lovely' can be the English equivalent of some adjectival and adverbial diminutives in *-ito*:

<i>¿Un café calentito?</i>	A nice cup of hot coffee?
<i>Las empanadas están recientitas despacito</i>	The meat pies are lovely and fresh nice and easy/take it easy

(c) To denote endearment or affection: *hermanita* (lit. 'little sister') is often a term of endearment and does not necessarily imply that the sister is younger than the speaker; *abuelita* 'grandma' is an affectionate form for *abuela* 'grandmother':

Vamos, m'hijito

(Lat. Am; Spain: *vamos hijo mío*)

Se ha hecho daño en la patita

Come on son

It's hurt its (little) paw

(d) To denote smallness:

el perro/el perrito

la puerta/la puertecita

el sillón/silloncito

el coche/cochecito

dog/little dog/doggy

door/little door

armchair/little armchair

car/little car/baby carriage

Note

Occasionally the diminutive form is of different gender: *la maleta* 'suitcase', *el maletín* 'small hand case', *la botella* 'bottle', *el botellín* (typically a small bottle of beer).

38.2.3 Diminutive suffix -illo

The suffix *-illo* is used:

(a) As a diminutive:

pan/panecillo

flor/florequilla

bread/bread roll

flower/little flower

(b) To downgrade the importance of something:

Falta una pesetilla

(Compare *Falta una peseta*)

Tengo unas cosillas que hacer

Ahora sólo queda el jalefílo de las entradas

(*jaleo* = row, fuss)

Hacia un airecillo agradable

You're just one peseta short

You're a peseta short)

I've got a few little things to do

All that's left is the business of the entrance tickets

There was a pleasant breeze

(c) To give an affectionate tone:

Pero ¿qué haces, chiquilla?

mentirosillo

He comprado un cachorrillo

But what are you doing, my dear girl?
'fibber'

I have bought a little puppy

Diminutives in *-illo* are typical of Seville but they are also often used in central Spain.

(d) To give a specialized meaning to a word, cf. English 'book'/'booklet'. In some of these cases the diminutive ending has no diminutive function:

el palo/palillo

la caja/cajetilla

la vara/varilla

la guerra/guerrilla

el cigarro/cigarrillo

la cama/camilla

la manzana/la manzanilla

la masa/la masilla

la ventana/la ventanilla

la bomba/la bombilla

la parral/la parrilla

el bolso/el bolsillo

stick/toothpick

box/box for cigarettes, etc.

rod/thin stick, spoke, wand

war/guerrilla warfare

cigar/cigarette

bed/circular table covered with a cloth

apple/camomile

dough/mass/putty

window/vehicle window/tickets window

bomb/light bulb

vine/grill

bag/pocket

(e) To denote a combination of diminutive and pejorative:

<i>la cultura/culturilla</i>	culture/'smattering of culture'
<i>mujer/mujercilla</i>	woman/unimportant woman

38.2.4 Diminutive suffix *-ín*

-ín is peculiar to Asturias but it is used to express affection in many contexts in the rest of Spain:

<i>¿Donde está el chiquitín?</i>	Where's the little one?
<i>¡Chiquirriquitín!</i>	My tiny little one!
<i>¡Mi niña chiquitina!</i> (not * <i>¡Mi pequeña niña!</i>)	My little girl!

and also to form new words:

<i>la espada/el espadín</i>	sword/dress sword
<i>la peluca/el peluquín</i>	wig/small wig
<i>la tesis/la tesina</i>	thesis/dissertation

38.2.5 Diminutive suffixes *-uelo, -eto, -ete*

(a) *-uelo* can denote a combination of diminutive and pejorative:

<i>la calleja/callejuela</i>	alley/narrow little alley
<i>el arroyo/arroyuelo</i>	stream/trickle, rivulet
<i>el rey/reyezuelo</i>	king/petty king, princeling
<i>tonto/tontuelo</i> (affectionate)	stupid/chump/dumbo

It may form new words:

<i>el paño/pañuelo</i>	cloth/handkerchief
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(b) *-eto, -ete* may add a specialized meaning:

<i>el avión</i>	aircraft	<i>la avioneta</i>	light aircraft
<i>el camión</i>	truck	<i>la camioneta</i>	van/light truck
<i>el caballo</i>	horse	<i>el caballete</i>	easel

(c) *-ete* may add a humorous tone:

<i>amigo/amiguete</i>	friend/pal
<i>gordo/regordete</i>	fat/chubby

38.2.6 Diminutive forms in Latin America

In many areas of Latin America, diminutive forms pervade everyday speech to an extent that amuses Spaniards:

<i>Viene ya merito</i> (Mexico; i.e. <i>ahora mismo</i>)	He's coming right now
<i>merito ayer no más</i> (Mexico) (i.e. <i>ayer mismo</i>)/ <i>Ahorita</i>	only yesterday
<i>lo voy a hacer</i> (i.e. <i>ahora mismo</i>)	I'll do it straight away (in practice it usually means 'when I can')
<i>Clarito la recuerdo</i>	I remember her vividly
<i>Apártate tantito, que voy a saltar</i> (Guatemalan, from Kany, 385)	Get out of the way a bit, I'm going to jump
<i>Reciencito llegó</i> (see 31.7.2 for <i>recién</i>)	He's just this minute arrived
<i>Las caras de los gringos son todititas igualitas</i> (C. Fuentes, dialogue, Mexico)	Gringos' faces are all exactly the same

38.3 'Augmentative' suffixes

Typical, in order of frequency, are *-ón*, *-azo*, *-ote*, *-udo*.

(a) These are mainly used to denote intensity or large size, almost always with some associated pejorative idea of clumsiness, unpleasantness, awkwardness, excess, etc.:

<i>rico/ricachón</i>	rich/stinking rich/'loaded'
<i>pedante/pedantón</i>	pedant/insufferable pedant
<i>el soltero/solterón</i>	bachelor/confirmed bachelor
<i>contestón</i>	tending to answer back/cheeky
<i>preguntón</i>	constantly asking questions
<i>cursil/cursilón</i>	affected/incredibly affected
<i>fácil/facilón</i>	easy/facile
<i>la bromal/el bromazo</i>	joke/joke pushed too far
<i>el coche/cochazo</i>	car/'heck of a car'
<i>el libro/librazo</i>	book/tome
<i>la ginebral/un ginebrazo</i>	gin/an enormous shot of gin
<i>el gringo/gringote</i>	gringo/bloody gringo
<i>la palabral/la palabrota</i>	word/swearword
<i>el favor/favorzote</i>	favour/'heck of a favour'
<i>El airón de la mañana había dejado el cielo azul</i> (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)	The gusts of breeze in the morning had left the sky blue

(b) To form an entirely new word. The suffix may then have no connotations of size or awkwardness and may even imply smallness:

<i>la rata/el ratón</i>	rat/mouse
<i>la cajal/el cajón</i>	box/drawer
<i>la cintural/el cinturón</i>	waist/belt
<i>el fuego/el fogón</i>	fire/stove
<i>la tela/el telón</i>	cloth/theatre curtain
<i>la cuerda/el cordón</i>	string/shoe-lace
<i>la leche/el lechazo</i>	milk/sucking lamb

Note

-azo is also much used to form nouns which denote a blow or flourish with some object:

<i>el aldabón/aldabonazo</i>	knocker/thump with a door knocker, blow on door
<i>el codo/codazo</i>	elbow/dig with elbow
<i>la bayoneta/el bayonetazo</i>	bayonet/bayonet thrust

38.4 Pejorative suffixes

These are not particularly frequent, especially now that graphic insults are often expressed by language once thought shocking. The words formed by them should be learnt as separate lexical items. Typical suffixes are *-aco*, *-arraco*, *-acho*, *-ajo*, *-astro*, *-uco*, *-ucho*, *-ejo* and a few others.

They variously denote ugliness, wretchedness, squalor, meanness, etc.

<i>el pájaro/pajarraco</i>	bird/sinister bird
<i>el poeta/poetaastro</i>	poet/rhymer, poetaster
<i>el pueblo/poblacho</i>	village/'dump', squalid village/dead-end town
<i>el latín/latinajo</i>	Latin/Latin jargon, dog Latin

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la casa/casucha

la palabra/palabreja

el hotel/hotelucho

house/pathetic little house

word/horrible word

hotel/dingy hotel

Some of these suffixes may be used affectionately:

*¿Cómo va a poder estudiar con tres
pequeñajas como esas/ésas?*

How is she going to be able to study with
three little terrors like them?

39

Spelling, accent rules, punctuation and word division

Index to chapter:

Alphabet and spelling	39.1
Use of the written accent	39.2
Upper and lower-case letters	39.3
Punctuation	39.4
Division of words	39.5

In some cases pronunciation is indicated by phonetic transcription. See footnote to 39.1.3 for an explanation of the signs used.

39.1 Spelling

39.1.1 The *Nuevas normas* and the alphabet

The spelling rules of modern Spanish are laid down by the Academy in the *Nuevas normas de prosodia y ortografía* which came into official use in January 1959. But even thirty years later pre-1959 spelling is still commonly used by persons who are not connected with the world of publishing, and the *Nuevas normas* are still inconsistently applied in print. (For further comments on the status of the *Nuevas normas* see 6.3 – demonstrative pronouns, 9.15 – *solo/sólo* and 13.2.3 – spelling of *prohibir*, *aislar*, *reunir*).

The spelling – particularly the use of the accent - in works published before 1959 will therefore differ in detail from this account. Among the more striking innovations were the removal of the accent from the words *fui*, *fue*, *dio*, *vio*, and its adoption in words like *búho*, *rehúso*, *reúne*, *ahínca*, *prohíbe*, *ahíto*.

39.1.2 The Spanish alphabet

The Spanish alphabet consists of the following letters:

a	<i>a</i>	g	<i>ge</i>	m	<i>eme</i>	s	<i>ese</i>	z	<i>zeta/zeda</i> ¹
b	<i>be</i>	h	<i>hache</i>	n	<i>ene</i>	t	<i>te</i>		
c	<i>ce</i>	i	<i>i</i>	ñ	<i>eñe</i>	u	<i>u</i>		
ch	<i>che</i>	j	<i>jota</i>	o	<i>o</i>	v	<i>uve</i>		
d	<i>de</i>	k	<i>ka</i>	p	<i>pe</i>	w	<i>uve doble</i>		
e	<i>e</i>	l	<i>ele</i>	q	<i>cu</i>	x	<i>equis</i>		
f	<i>efe</i>	ll	<i>elle</i>	r	<i>erre/ere</i>	y	<i>i griega</i>		

¹ The Academy recommends *zeda* but usage prefers *zeta*.

Double *r* (*erre doble*) is a separate sound but it is not treated as a separate letter of the alphabet.

Ch and *ll* are traditionally treated as separate letters so that in alphabetical lists words beginning with *ch* or *ll* follow words beginning with *c* or *l*: *mancha* follows *mancornas* and *collado* follows *colza*, etc. This is very inconvenient for computerized sorting and out of line with other languages that use Latin letters, and a number of authorities, including Seco (1992), 92, 247, advocate standard alphabetical order.²

The Academy rules that accents should always be written on capital letters, a convention that is also problematic for computers and word-processors and is often ignored.

Note

Letters of the alphabet are all feminine – *la cu*, *la uve* – and one says *la/una a*, *la/una hache*, despite the rule that singular feminine words beginning with a stressed *a* sound require the masculine article, cf. *el arma* (fem.) ‘the weapon’ (see 3.1.2 for discussion).

39.1.3 Relationship between sounds and letters

Spanish spelling is not entirely rational, but it is much more logical than French or English. Basically one sound corresponds to one letter, so one merely needs to hear words like *colocar* [kolokár]³ ‘to place’, *chaleco* [chaléko] ‘waistcoat’/(US) ‘vest’, *calenturiento* [kalenturyénto] ‘feverish’, to be able to spell them correctly. However, the rule of one sound for one letter is broken in numerous cases:

(a) *H* is always silent, except in some rural dialects, but it is common in writing, where it is merely a burden on the memory: *hacha* [ácha] ‘axe’/(US) ‘ax’, *hombre* [ómbre] ‘man’, *Huesca* [wéska], *Honduras* [ondúras], *ahíto* [a-íto] ‘gorged’/‘satiated’, etc.

H had one useful function in the past: it showed that two adjacent vowels did not form a diphthong, as in words like *prohibe* [pro-íβe] ‘prohibits’, *buho* [bú-o] ‘owl’, *rehila* ‘it quivers’ [rre-íla], *la retahila* [larreta-íla] ‘volley’/‘string’ (e.g. of insults). In its wisdom the Academy abolished this rule in 1959, so one must now write *prohíbe*, *búho*, *rehíla*, *la retahíla*, etc.

The sound [w] at the beginning of a syllable – i.e. when it is not preceded by a consonant – is spelt *hu*: *huele* [wéle] ‘it smells’, *ahuecar* [awekár] ‘to hollow out’, *Náhuatl* [ná-watl] ‘the Nahuatl language (of Mexico)’, etc.

(b) *Z* is pronounced [θ] (like the *th* of ‘think’) in standard European Spanish, like the *s* of ‘sit’ throughout Latin America and in Southern Spain and the Canary Islands. *Z* is written *c* before *i* or *e*: *cebra* [θéβra/séβra] ‘zebra’, *hacer*

²As this book was going to print (27 April 1994), the 10th Conference of Academies of the Spanish Language voted by a large majority to abolish *ch* and *ll* as separate letters, so normal alphabetical order should now be used. The position of *ñ* is unchanged.

³Transcription conventions: χ = voiceless velar fricative, i.e. *ch* in ‘loch’ or *ch* in German *lachen*; β = bilabial voiced fricative (*v* pronounced with both lips); γ = voiced velar fricative (not found in English: *g* as in ‘got’ but without closure of the throat); θ = ‘th’ in ‘think’, ð = ‘th’ in ‘this’, λ = palatalized ‘l’, rr = rolled *r*. Stressed syllables marked by acute accent. Other signs should be given their usual Spanish pronunciation.

[aθér/asér] ‘to do’, *nación* [naθyón/nasyón]] ‘nation’, etc. For this reason, a verb like *realizar* ‘to attain’/‘to achieve’/‘to bring about’ undergoes spelling changes: *realizo*, *realice*, *realicé*, *realizó*, etc. See 13.2.2 for the effect of these and other spelling rules on the verb system.

There are a few exceptions, e.g. *el eczema* (or *el eccema*) ‘eczema’, *la enzima* ‘enzyme’, *zeta/zeda* ‘zed’/(US) ‘zee’, *Nueva Zelanda* (in Latin America *Nueva Zelandia*) ‘New Zealand’, *zigzag* (plural *zigzags*), *Zimbabuel/Zimbabwe*, *zinc* (also *cinc*) ‘zinc’, *zipizape* ‘rumpus’/‘fuss’/‘noisy quarrel’.

Spelling in Latin America and Andalusia is much more troublesome than in central Spain since *z*, *c(e)*, *c(i)* and *s* are all pronounced identically, so that pairs of words like *caza* ‘hunt’ and *casa* ‘house’, *ves* ‘you see’ and *vez* ‘time’ (as in ‘three times’), *Sena* ‘the river Seine’ and *cena* ‘supper’ sound the same.

(c) The sound of *c* in *cama* is written *qu* before *e* and *i*: *querer* [kerér] ‘to want’, *quiso* [kíso] ‘wanted’, *saque* [sáke] ‘take out’ (third-person present subjunctive of *sacar*), etc.

The letter *k* is consequently not needed in Spanish and is found only in foreign words, for example measurements preceded by *kilo-*, or in *kantiano* ‘Kantian’, *krausismo*, ‘Krausism’, *el kiwi* [elkíβi] ‘kiwi’/‘kiwi fruit’, *Kuwait* [kuβáyt] ‘Kuwait’, etc.

The sound [kw] is always written *cu*, e.g. *cuestión* [kwestyón] ‘question’⁴, *cuáquero* [kwákero] ‘Quaker’ (students of Portuguese and Italian take note!).

(d) The sound [χ] (like *ch* in ‘loch’) is always written *j* before *a*, *o* and *u*, and is usually written *g* before *e* and *i*: *general* [χenerál], *Gibraltar* [χiβraltár], *rige* [rrixé] ‘he/she/it rules’, *rugir* [rruxír] ‘to roar’, etc.

There are numerous exceptions to the latter rule, e.g. the preterite of all verbs whose infinitive ends in *ducir* – the preterite of *producir* ‘to produce’ is *produje*, *produjiste*, *produjo*, *produjimos*, *produjisteis*, *produjeron* – and many other words, e.g.

<i>la bujía</i>	spark plug	<i>la jeta</i>	thick lips/snout
<i>crujir</i>	to rustle/to crackle	<i>Jiménez</i>	(a personal name)
<i>dejé</i>	I left behind (from <i>dejar</i>)	<i>la jirafa</i>	giraffe
<i>el equipaje</i>	luggage	<i>el paisaje</i>	landscape
<i>el garaje</i>	garage	<i>tejer</i>	to weave
<i>la jeringa</i>	syringe	<i>el traje</i>	suit
<i>el jersey</i>	jersey	<i>el ultraje</i>	outrage
<i>el jesuita</i>	Jesuit	etc.	
<i>Jesús</i>	Jesus		

(e) The sound of *g* in *hago* [áyo] is written *gu* before *e* and *i*: *ruegue* [rrwéye] present subjunctive of *rogar* ‘to request’, *la guirnalda* [layirnálda] ‘wreath’/‘garland’. The *u* is silent and simply shows that the *g* is not pronounced like Spanish *j* [χ].

The syllables pronounced [gwe] and [gwi] (neither very common in Spanish) are written *güe* and *güi*, e.g. *lingüístico* [lingwístiko], *el desagüe* [eldesáywe] ‘drainage’/‘water outlet’, *averigüe* [aβeríywe] present subjunctive of *averiguar* ‘to check’, *nicaragüense* [nikaraywéense] ‘Nicaraguan’, *el pingüino*

⁴ It means ‘issue’/‘problem’. Compare *la pregunta* ‘question’, i.e. something one asks.

[elpingwino] 'penguin'. This is the only use of the dieresis in the modern language.

(f) *B* and *v* sound exactly the same and are most frequently pronounced as a voiced bilabial fricative [β], although they both sound like the English *b* after *n* or *m* or after a pause. The English sound [v] as in 'vat' does not exist in Spanish, and English speakers of Spanish often make a false distinction between the pronunciation of the Spanish written signs *b* and *v*. For this reason they usually do not confuse these letters in writing.

Native speakers who are poor spellers make blunders like **la uba* for *la uva* [la-úβa] 'grape', **Premio Novel* for *Premio Nobel* [prémjonoβél] 'Nobel Prize' – mistakes which are at least the sign of a normal pronunciation.

(g) In Spain, *x* is usually pronounced like *s* before a consonant: *extender* = [estendér] 'to extend', *el extracto*, = [elestráкто] 'extract', etc. Seco (1992), 381, rejects the pronunciation of *x* as [ks] in this position as affected, but many Latin Americans insist on it.

For the pronunciation and spelling of the words *México*, *mexicano*, *Oaxaca* see 4.8.1.

X is pronounced [s] at the beginning of words: *la xenofobia* [lasenofóβya] 'xenophobia', *el xilófono* [elsilófono] (colloquially *el xilofón* [elsilofón]) 'xylophone'.

The pronunciation [ks] is normal between vowels and at the end of words: *el examen* [eleksámen] 'examination', *el taxi* 'taxi' [eltáksi], *Xerox* [séroks]. Learners should avoid popular pronunciations like [esámen], [tási], occasionally heard in Spain.

(h) *N* is pronounced *m* before *b*, *v*, *p*: *en Barcelona* = [embarθelóna /embarselóna] 'in Barcelona', *invitar* = [imbitár] 'to invite', *en París* = [emparís] 'in Paris'.

(i) *R* and *rr* represent a flapped and a rolled *r* ([r] and [rr]) respectively, and in a few words they indicate a difference of meaning, e.g. *pero* [péro] 'but', *perro* [pérro] 'dog'; *caro* [káro] 'dear', *carro* [kárro] 'car'/'cart'; *enteró* [enteró] 'he informed', *enterró* [enterró] 'he buried'.

But *r* is pronounced like *rr* when it is the first letter in a word, e.g. *Roma* [rróma], *la ropa* [larrópa] 'clothes', or when it occurs after *l*, *n* or *s*: *Israel* [isrraél], *la sonrisa* [lasonrrísa] 'smile', *alrededor* [alrreðeðór] 'around'.

When a prefix ending in a vowel is added to a word beginning with *r*, the *r* is doubled in writing and is therefore rolled in speech: *infra+rojo* = *infrarrojo* 'infra-red' *contra+revolucionario* = *contrarrevolucionario* 'counter-revolutionary', *anti+republicano* = *antirrepublicano* 'anti-Republican'. Such words are not spelt with a hyphen in Spanish.

(j) *Ll* is properly a palatalized *l* [ʎ] but it is nowadays pronounced like the letter *y* by many speakers, to the dismay of many purists. Poor spellers sometimes make mistakes like **cullo* for *cuyo* 'whose', *la *balloneta* for *la bayoneta* 'bayonet'.

It is much better to pronounce it *y* than to pronounce it like the *lli* of 'million', which is written *li* in Spanish. *Polio* [póljo] 'polio' and *pollo* [pólo] 'chicken' sound quite different in correct Spanish.

(k) *M* is often pronounced *n* at the end of words by many, though not by all speakers: *el álbum* = [elálβun/elálβum] 'album', *el referéndum* = [elrreferéndun] 'referendum', *el ultimátum* = [elultimátun] 'ultimatum'.

(l) The three initial groups of consonants *ps*, *mn* and *gn* are pronounced *s*, *n* and *n* respectively and may now officially be spelt this way. But few people can bring themselves to write *la sicología* for *la psicología* 'psychology' or *la siquiatria* for *la psiquiatria* 'psychiatry', and it is doubtful whether anyone would write *la nosis* or *nóstico* for *la gnosis*, *gnóstico* 'gnosis', 'gnostic'. The old forms are therefore still used – even by the Academy itself. *El seudónimo* 'pseudonym' is, however, universally used.

(m) The *p* in *septiembre* 'September' and *séptimo* 'seventh' is sometimes silent and may be dropped in writing, according to the Academy. But many find the forms *setiembre*, *sétimo* repugnant and the forms with *p* are much more common.

(n) If the prefix *re-* is added to a word beginning with *e*, one of the *es* may be dropped in writing: *re+emplazo* > *reemplazo* or *reemplazo* 'replacement', *re+embolso* > *reembolso* or *reembolso* 'reimbursement', *reelige* > *reelige* 're-elects'. The new spelling is frequently (but not universally) seen in Latin America, but the spelling with *ree-* is much more usual in Spain.

(o) The sound [y] (like the *y* in 'yacht') is always spelt *y* at the end of words: *Paraguay*, *convoy*.

39.1.4 Trans- or Tras-

Some uncertainty surrounds the spelling of words which begin with the prefix *trans-* or *tras-*. Educated usage seems to be:

Normally trans-

transalpino
transatlántico
transbordar
transbordo
transcribir
transcripción
transcurrir
transcurso
transferencia
transferir
transformar
transformación
transfusión
transgredir
transgresión
transgresor
transmigración
transmisión
transmitir
transmisión
transparencia
transparentar
transparente
transpirar
transpiración
transpirenaico
transportar
transporte
transposición
transversal

Usually tras-

trascendencia
trascendental
trascendente
trascender
trasponer
trasvasar

Always tras-

trasfondo
trashumancia
trashumante
trasladar
traslado
traslucir
trasluz
trasnochar
traspapelar
traspasar
traspaso
traspíe
trasplantar
trasplante
traspunte
trasquilar
trastienda
trastocar
trastornar
trastorno
trastrócar
trastrueque

Source: Seco (1992), 362. Seco notes that in the case of the first two columns the alternative spellings in *tras-* and *trans-* respectively are tolerated by the Academy but are not in general use.

39.2 The written accent

39.2.1 General rules

Native Spanish speakers are rather careless about the use of the written accent in handwriting, but in printing and formal writing the rules must be observed.

The basic rule is: if a word is stressed regularly, no written accent is required. If a word is stressed irregularly, the position of the stress must be shown by an acute accent on the stressed vowel. Stress is regular:

(a) if the word ends in a consonant other than *n* or *s* and the stress falls on the last syllable;

(b) if the word ends in a vowel or *n* or *s* and the stress falls on the penultimate syllable.

The following words therefore have regular stress and require no written accent:

<i>la calle</i>	street
<i>la cama</i>	bed
<i>contestad</i>	answer (<i>vosotros</i> imperative)
<i>el coñac</i>	brandy
<i>denle</i>	give him (plural imperative, <i>ustedes</i> form)
<i>la imagen</i>	image
<i>el jueves</i>	Thursday
<i>Madrid</i>	
<i>natural</i>	natural
<i>(el) Paraguay</i>	
<i>redondo</i>	round (adjective)
<i>el reloj</i>	(pronounced <i>reló</i>) clock/watch
<i>el sacacorchos</i>	cork-screw
<i>la tribu</i>	tribe
<i>la virgen</i>	virgin
<i>volver</i>	return

The following are stressed irregularly and must have a written accent:

<i>el álbum</i>	album
<i>alérgicamente</i>	allergically
<i>contésténles</i>	answer them (<i>ustedes</i> imperative)
<i>decídmelo</i>	tell me it (<i>vosotros</i> imperative)
<i>difícil</i>	difficult
<i>dirán</i>	they will say (from <i>decir</i>)
<i>fácil</i>	easy
<i>las imágenes</i>	images
<i>la nación</i>	nation
<i>la química</i>	chemistry
<i>el récord</i>	record (in sports, etc.)
<i>el rehén</i>	hostage
<i>la/las síntesis</i>	synthesis/syntheses
<i>las vírgenes</i>	virgins

Note

Words ending in two consonants of which the second is *s* (all of them foreign words) are regularly stressed on the last syllable: *Orleans*, *los complots* 'plots', *los cabarets* 'cabarets'. *Ellos fórceps* 'forceps', *ellos bíceps* 'biceps', *ellos récords* are exceptions.

39.2.2 Diphthongs, triphthongs and the position of the stress accent

Spanish vowels are divided into two classes:

Strong	Semi-vowels
<i>a, e, o</i>	<i>i</i> when pronounced [y]
<i>i</i> when pronounced as in <i>ti</i>	<i>u</i> when pronounced [w]
<i>u</i> when pronounced as in <i>tú</i>	

Vowels may appear in combinations of two or three, e.g. *eai*, *au*, *uai*, *iai*, etc. An intervening *h* is disregarded, so that *au* and *ahu*, *eu* and *ehu*, *ai* and *ahi*, etc. are treated the same way (at least since the publication of the Academy's *Nuevas normas*).

(a) When two or more **strong** vowels appear side by side, they are pronounced as separate syllables⁵ and do not form diphthongs or triphthongs:

<i>leo</i>	[lé-o]	I read
<i>créamelo</i>	[kré-amelo]	believe me
<i>pasee</i>	[pasé-e]	subjunctive of <i>pasear</i> 'to go for a walk'
<i>moho</i>	[mó-o]	rust/mildew
<i>Seoane</i>	[se-o-á-ne]	(a surname)

An accent is required to show that an *i* or *u* combined with other vowels is pronounced strong (i.e. is not a semi-vowel): *creí* [kre-í] 'I believed', *aún* [a-ún] 'still'/'yet'.

(b) A combination, in either order, of a **strong vowel** plus a **semi-vowel** creates a diphthong and is counted as a single vowel for the purpose of finding the position of the written accent. Therefore the following words are stressed predictably:

<i>arduo</i>	[árðwo]	arduous
<i>continuo</i>	[kontínwo]	continuous
<i>la lengua</i>	[laléngwa]	tongue/language
<i>Francia</i>	[fránθya/fránsya]	France
<i>la historia</i>	[laystórya]	history/story
<i>produjisteis</i>	[proðuxísteyz]	you produced
<i>hablabais</i>	[abláβays]	you were speaking

and the following words have unpredictable stress and require a written accent:

<i>amáis</i>	[amáys]	you love
<i>debéis</i>	[deβéys]	you owe
<i>volvió</i>	[bolβyó]	he/she returned
<i>continúo</i>	[kontinú-o]	I continue
<i>hacías</i>	[aθías/asías]	you were doing
<i>ella respondía</i>	[eálarrespondía]	she was answering/responding

⁵ Adjacent strong vowels are in fact often run together in rapid speech and pronounced as one syllable, a phenomenon known as syneresis. This happens when the last of the vowels in the sequence is stressed or when none of them is stressed. Thus *león* is often pronounced [león] (one syllable) rather than [le-ón], but this has no effect on spelling.

(c) If a semi-vowel is added to a diphthong, a triphthong is formed. Triphthongs are also counted as a single vowel for the purpose of determining where a written accent should appear:

<i>continúais</i>	[kontinwáys]	you continue (three syllables)
<i>vieiras</i>	[byéyras]	scallops (Spain only; two syllables)
<i>cambiáis</i>	[kambyáys]	you change (two syllables)

Note

Students of Portuguese should remember that Portuguese has very different rules and writes *colónia*, *história*, but *temia* (stressed like the Spanish *temía*).

39.2.3 Written accent on stressed diphthongs and combinations of strong vowels

If one of a group of combined vowels is stressed, the written accent may or may not appear on it. There are three possibilities:

(a) If the combination is **strong vowel + semi-vowel** the stress falls predictably on the strong vowel, so the following require no written accent:

<i>vais</i>	[báys]	you go (<i>vosotros</i> form)
<i>el aire</i>	[eláyre]	the air
<i>veis</i>	[béys]	you see (<i>vosotros</i> form)
<i>el peine</i>	[elpéyne]	comb
<i>la causa</i>	[lakáwsa]	cause
<i>Palau</i>	[paláw]	(personal surname)
<i>Berneu</i>	[bernéw]	(personal surname)
<i>alcaloide</i>	[alkalóyðe]	alkaloid

and the following are exceptions:

<i>el país</i>	[elpa-ís]	country
<i>el baúl</i>	[elβa-úl]	trunk/car-boot/(US) 'car trunk'
<i>aún</i>	[a-ún]	still/yet (pronounced differently from <i>aun</i> , 'even')
<i>reír</i>	[rre-ír]	to laugh
<i>reis</i>	[rre-ís]	you (<i>vosotros</i>) laugh
<i>reúne</i>	[rre-úne]	he reunites
<i>prohíbe</i>	[pro-íβe]	he prohibits
<i>heroína</i>	[ero-ína]	heroine/heroin
<i>el arcaísmo</i>	[arka-ísmo]	archaism
<i>ahí</i>	[a-í]	there
<i>oís</i>	[o-ís]	you (<i>vosotros</i>) hear
etc.		

(b) If the combination is **semi-vowel plus strong vowel**, the stress also falls predictably on the strong vowel, so the following require no accent; but see note (i):

<i>fui</i>	[fwí]	I was
<i>huído</i> ⁶	[wíðo]	fled (past participle of <i>huir</i> 'to flee')
<i>la ruína</i>	[larrwína]	ruin
<i>tiene</i>	[tyéne]	he has (from <i>tener</i>)
<i>luego</i>	[lwéyo]	then/later
<i>cuenta</i>	[kwénta]	she/he counts
<i>la tiara</i>	[latyára]	tiara

⁶ *Huido*, *construido* and other words ending in *-uido* are stressed regularly, whereas words like *creído* 'believed' (past participle of *creer*) and *reído* 'laughed' (past participle of *reír*) are written with an accent because they fall under the exceptions to (a).

<i>acuoso</i>	[akwóso]	watery
<i>vio</i>	[byó]	she/he saw
<i>dio</i>	[dyó]	he/she gave
<i>el pie</i>	[elpyé]	foot
<i>la viuda</i>	[laβyúða]	widow

and the following are exceptions:

<i>el dúo</i>	[eldúo]	duet/duo
<i>el búho</i>	[elβú-o]	owl
<i>frío</i>	[frí-o]	cold
<i>rie</i>	[rrí-e]	he/she laughs (from <i>reír</i>)
<i>se fia</i>	[sefí-a]	he/she trusts (from <i>fiarse</i>)

(c) If the combination is **strong vowel + strong vowel** the two vowels form separate syllables, so the following are stressed predictably:

<i>los jacarandaes</i>	[losχakarandá-es]	jacaranda trees (plural of <i>el jacarandá</i>)
<i>los noes</i>	[losnó-es]	noes
<i>el caos</i>	[elká-os]	chaos
<i>ahonda</i>	[a-ónða]	he/she deepens
<i>feo</i>	[fé-o]	ugly
<i>leen</i>	[lé-en]	they read
<i>la boa</i>	[laβó-a]	boa (the snake may be <i>el boa</i> in Lat. Am.)
<i>el moho</i>	[elmó-o]	rust/mildew

and the following are exceptions:

<i>aéreo</i>	[a-éreo]	air (adjective)
<i>el león</i>	[el-le-ón]	lion
<i>el deán</i>	[elde-án]	dean (ecclesiastical)
<i>el rehén</i>	[elrre-én]	hostage

Notes

(i) Accented forms like *rió* [rri-ó] 'he laughed', *lió* [li-ó] 'he tied in a bundle', *huís* [u-ís] 'you (*vosotros*) flee', *huí* [u-í] 'I fled', etc. are apparent exceptions to rule (b) that the second vowel is predictably stressed in the combination semi-vowel + strong vowel: compare *fui* 'I was', *fue* 'he/she was', *vio* 'he/she saw', *dio* 'he/she gave'. The former words are given a written accent to show that the two vowels are pronounced separately, whereas *vio*, *dio*, *fui* and *fue* are pronounced as monosyllabic words [byó], [dyó], [fwí], [fwé]. Compare the pronunciation of *pie* 'foot' ([pyé]) with *pié* [pi-é], first-person preterite of *piar* 'to cheep' (like a bird).

(ii) See 39.2.2 for triphthongs.

(iii) When an object pronoun is added to a finite verb form (this is nowadays rare) an original written accent is retained: *acabó* + *se* = *acabóse* for *se acabó* 'it ended'. See 11.14.1 note (ii) for a discussion of this construction.

(iv) If a word bearing a written accent is joined to another to form a compound, the original written accent is discarded: *tío* + *vivo* = *tiovivo* 'merry-go-round', *balón* + *cesto* = *baloncesto* 'basketball', etc.

39.2.4 Written accent: some common doubtful cases

The following forms are recommended (where *el/la* precedes the noun it may refer to a male or a female; when no accent is written the stressed vowel is shown in bold):

<i>la acrobacia</i>	acrobatics
<i>afrodisiaco</i>	aphrodisiac
<i>amoniaco</i>	ammonia

<i>austriaco</i>	Austrian
<i>cardiaco</i>	cardiac
<i>el/la chófer</i> ⁷	driver
<i>el cóctel</i>	cocktail
<i>demoniaco</i>	or <i>demoniaco</i> 'demonic'; likewise other words ending in <i>-iaco/iaco</i> , the unaccented form being more common
<i>la dinamo</i> ⁸	dynamo
<i>disponte</i>	familiar imperative of <i>disponerse</i> 'to get ready' ⁹
<i>el electrodo</i>	electrode
<i>etíope</i>	Ethiopian
<i>la exégesis</i> or <i>la exegesis</i>	exegetics
<i>el frijol</i> ¹⁰	bean
<i>el fútbol</i> ¹¹	soccer
<i>el géiser</i>	geyser (geological)
<i>hipocondriaco</i>	(see <i>demoniaco</i> above)
<i>ibero</i> (less commonly <i>ibero</i>)	Iberian
<i>el láser</i>	laser
<i>la metempsicosis</i>	metempsychosis
<i>el meteoro</i>	meteor
<i>el misil</i> (less commonly <i>mísil</i>)	missile
<i>la olimpiada</i>	Olympiad
<i>la orgía</i>	orgy
<i>la ósmosis</i> or <i>osmosis</i>	osmosis
<i>el pábilo</i>	wick (of a candle)
<i>el parásito</i>	parasite
<i>el/la pediatra</i>	paediatrician/(US) pediatrician
<i>el periodo</i> or <i>período</i>	period
<i>el/la políglota</i>	polyglot
<i>el/la psiquiatra</i>	psychiatrist
<i>policíaco</i>	(see <i>demoniaco</i> above)
<i>la quiromancia</i> ¹²	palmistry/hand-reading
<i>el rádar</i>	radar
<i>el reptil</i>	reptile
<i>el reuma</i>	rheumatism (sometimes also <i>el reúma</i>)
<i>el sánscrito</i>	Sanskrit
<i>el termostato</i>	thermostat
<i>la torticólis</i>	stiff neck
<i>la utopía</i>	utopia
<i>el zodiaco</i>	(see <i>demoniaco</i> above)

Some 'mispronunciations' are usual in speech: *el soviét* 'Soviet', *el oceano* 'ocean' (written and correctly pronounced *el océano*).

39.2.5 Accent on interrogative forms

In the case of some words, the interrogative form carries an accent. This indicates a fact of pronunciation: the interrogative form is stressed, as can

⁷ Written and pronounced *chofer* in many countries of Latin America, including Mexico.

⁸ *El dínamo* in some Latin-American countries, including Argentina and Cuba.

⁹ Similarly *componte* 'compose yourself', *detente* 'stop'.

¹⁰ Stressed *el frijol* in Latin America.

¹¹ *El fútbol* is heard in some Latin-American countries.

¹² Likewise all words ending in *-mancia* that have the meaning 'divination'.

be seen by contrasting the *que*'s in *Dice que qué pasa* 'He's asking what's happening' or the *cuando*'s in *cuando llega* 'when he arrives . . .' and *¿Cuándo llega?* 'When is he arriving?'

These words are:

<i>cómo</i>	how	<i>dónde</i>	where
<i>cuál</i>	which	<i>qué</i>	what/which
<i>cuándo</i>	when	<i>quién</i>	who
<i>cuánto</i>	how much		

See Chapter 24 for further details.

39.2.6 Accent used to distinguish homonyms

In the case of some two dozen common words, the written accent merely eliminates ambiguities:

	without accent	with accent
<i>de/dé</i>	of	present subjunctive of <i>dar</i>
<i>el/él</i>	the (def. article)	he/it
<i>este/éste/ese/ése</i>	see 6.3	
<i>aquella/quél</i>		
<i>mas/más</i>	but (rare)	more
<i>mi/mí</i>	my	me (after prepositions)
<i>se/sé</i>	reflexive pronoun	(i) I know, (ii) <i>tú</i> imperative of <i>ser</i>
<i>si/sí</i>	if	(i) yes, (ii) prepositional form of <i>se</i>
<i>solo/sólo</i> (see 9.15)	alone	only (<i>solamente</i>)
<i>te/té</i>	object form of <i>tú</i>	tea
<i>tú/tú</i>	your	you

Notes

(i) *Dé* loses its accent if a pronoun is attached and the stress is regular: *denos*, 'give us', *deme* 'give me', etc.

(ii) The Academy requires that *o* ('or') should take an accent when it appears between two numerals so as to avoid confusion with zero: *9 ó 5* '9 or 5'. However, *El País* (*Libro de estilo* 11.97) orders its journalists to ignore this rule and write *9 o 5*.

(iii) The following words do **not** have a written accent: *da* 'gives', *di* 'I gave', *fe* 'faith', *ti* prepositional form of *tú*, *vi* 'I saw', *ve* 'sees'.

(iv) *Aun* 'even' [áwn] and *aún* 'still/yet' [a-ún] are in fact pronounced differently in good Spanish.

39.3 Upper and lower-case letters

39.3.1 Upper-case letters

These are used much more sparingly than in English. They are used:

(a) At the beginning of sentences, as in English.

(b) With proper nouns, but not with the adjectives derived from them: *Madrid*, *la vida madrileña* 'Madrid life'; *Colombia*, *la cocina colombiana* 'Colombian cooking'; *Shakespeare*, *el lenguaje shakespeariano* 'Shakespearean (or Shakespeare's) language'.

Adjectives that are part of an official name are capitalized, e.g. *Nueva Zeland(i)a* 'New Zealand', *el Reino Unido* 'the United Kingdom', *Los Estados*

Unidos 'the United States', *El Partido Conservador* 'The Conservative Party', *Las Naciones Unidas* 'The United Nations', etc.

When a proper name includes the definite article, the latter is written with a capital letter *El Cairo* 'Cairo', *La Haya*.

In the case of countries that appear with the definite article, the article is not part of the name, so a lower-case letter is used: *la India* 'India', *la Argentina*. See 3.2.17 for discussion of this use of the article.

39.3.2 Lower-case letters

Lower-case letters are used for:

(a) Months, seasons and days of the week: *julio* 'July', *agosto* 'August', *verano* 'summer', *invierno* 'winter', *jueves* 'Thursday', *viernes* 'Friday', *martes* 'Tuesday', etc.

(b) Names of religions and their followers: *el cristianismo* 'Christianity', *el catolicismo* 'Catholicism', *el protestantismo* 'Protestantism', *el islam* 'Islam', *un testigo de Jehová* 'a Jehovah's witness', *los musulmanes* 'the Muslims', etc.

(c) Official titles, e.g. *el presidente de la República*, 'the President of the Republic', *la reina de Gran Bretaña* 'the Queen of Great Britain', *el papa Juan XXIII* 'Pope John XXIII', *los reyes de España* 'the King and Queen of Spain', *el señor García* 'Sr García', *ministro de Obras Públicas* 'the Minister for Public Works', etc.

(d) Book and film titles: only the first letter is in upper case, as well as the first letter of any proper name that appears in the title: *Cien años de soledad* 'One Hundred Years of Solitude', *El otoño del patriarca* 'The Autumn of the Patriarch', *El espía que surgió del frío* ('The Spy who came in from the Cold'), *Vida de Manuel Rosas* 'The Life of Manuel Rosas', *La guerra de las galaxias* ('Star Wars'), etc.

However, the titles of newspapers and magazines are capitalized: *El País*, *La Nación*, *Ordenador Personal* 'Personal Computer', etc.

(e) For points of the compass: *norte* 'North', *sur* 'South', *este* 'East', *oeste* 'West'. They are capitalized if they are part of a name: *América del Norte*, 'North America', etc.

39.4 Punctuation

These remarks refer only to major differences between Spanish and English. Readers who need a detailed account of Spanish punctuation should refer to specialized manuals.

39.4.1 Full stops/periods and commas

The full stops/(US) 'period' (*el punto*) is used as in English, except that abbreviations are usually always written with a full stop:

English	Spanish
3000 pts	3000 ptas.
Sr González	Sr. González

and a point is used in numbers where English uses a comma, and vice-versa: 1.567,50 = 1,567.50 and 1,005 (*uno coma cero cero cinco*) = 1.005 ('one point zero zero five'). Mexico, however, follows the conventions used in English.

Commas (*la coma*) are used much as in English, except for writing decimals (see preceding paragraph). A comma is not written before the conjunction *y* in a series: *pumas, coyotes y monos* 'pumas, coyotes and monkeys'. Two clauses with different subjects are separated by a comma whereas in English the comma is nowadays often omitted: *Juan es uruguayo, y Marta es argentina* 'Juan is Uruguayan and Marta is Argentine'.

39.4.2 Colons

Colons (*dos puntos*) are used as in English except that they appear after salutations in letters: *Muy Sr. mío:*¹³ 'Dear Sir,' *Querida Ana:* 'Dear Ana'.

39.4.3 Semi colons

Semi colons (*punto y coma*) are used much as in English, except that they may be used after a series of commas instead of a comma to denote a longer pause:

<i>Tenía pan, huevos y vino; pero no tenía carne</i>	He had bread, eggs and wine, but he had no meat
<i>Miguel entró cansado, confuso; María le siguió, radiante y orgulloso</i>	Miguel came in, tired, confused. Maria followed him, radiant and proud

The semi colon is also much used before connectors, e.g. *sin embargo/no obstante* 'nevertheless', *a pesar de esto* 'despite this', that are themselves followed by a comma: *Le escribí más de una vez; sin embargo, no me contestó* 'I wrote to him more than once. However, he did not reply'.

39.4.4 Quotations and the representation of dialogue

There is no clear agreement over the use of *comillas* and inverted commas.

The signs « and » may be used (at least in Spain) like our inverted commas to indicate quotations or slang, dialect or other unusual forms, and occasionally to indicate dialogue within a paragraph:

Un inspector de bigotillo con acento «pied noir» acompañado de un gendarme de uniforme, va recorriendo las mesas pidiendo documentación: «No pasa nada, es sólo una operación de rutina». Sin embargo, todo este impresionante montaje sorprende a todos. (Cambio16, Spain)

A further quotation within « » is indicated by ' '. However, the *Libro de estilo* of *El País* (11.31) explicitly forbids the use of « » and requires use of "" for quoted material and ' ' for quotations within quotations. This convention is used in many publications, including this one.

Single quotation marks are in used in *El País* to enclose unusual or foreign words: *La palabra 'esnob' viene del inglés 'the word "snob" comes from English'.*

Dashes are used to enclose dialogue. There are three types of dash in Spanish:

<i>el guión</i>	hyphen	short -
<i>el signo de menos</i>	minus sign	medium length –
<i>la raya</i>	dash	double length —

In the representation of continuous dialogue inverted commas are not used, the words spoken being introduced by a *raya*.

¹³ The formula used in the Southern Cone is *De mi consideración:*.

A *raya* marks either a change of speaker or a resumption of dialogue after an interruption. Dialogue is terminated by another *raya* only if unspoken words follow, as in)—*Ahora váyase —dijo— y no vuelva más hasta que yo le avise.*

Punctuation in direct speech is disconcertingly placed after the *raya*: —*Aprovecha ahora que eres joven para sufrir todo lo que puedas —le decía—, que estas cosas no duran toda la vida.* (G. García Márquez, *El amor en los tiempos del cólera*).

Example:

—*¿Te parece que hablo de él con cierto rencor, con resentimiento? —Juanita hace un curioso mohín y veo que no pregunta por preguntar; es algo que debe preocuparla hace mucho tiempo.*

—*No noté nada de eso —le digo—. He notado, sí, que evitas llamar a Mayta por su nombre. Siempre das un rodeo en vez de decir Mayta. ¿Es por lo de Jauja, porque estás segura que fue él quien empujó a Vallejos?*

—*No estoy segura —niega Juanita—. Es posible que mi hermano tuviera también su parte de responsabilidad. Pero pese a que no quiero, me doy cuenta que le guardo un poco de rencor. No por lo de Jauja. Porque lo hizo dudar. Esa última vez que estuvimos juntos le pregunté: «¿Te vas a volver un ateo como tu amigo Mayta, también te va a dar por eso?» No me respondió lo que yo esperaba. Encogió los hombros y dijo:*

—*A lo mejor, hermana, porque la revolución es lo primero.*

(M. Vargass Llosa, *Historia de Mayta*, Seix Barral. Printed in Spain.)

39.4.5 Question and exclamation marks

Spanish is unique among the world's languages in that a question or exclamation must be introduced by an upside-down question or exclamation mark and followed by normal question and exclamation marks.

The logic behind this is that it enables readers to start the intonation for a question or exclamation at the right point, so words that are not included in the interrogatory or exclamatory intonation pattern lie outside the signs:

Oye, ¿quieres una cerveza?

Hace calor, ¿verdad?

Si te digo que no he gastado más que dos mil pesetas, ¿me vas a creer?

Pero, ¡qué estupidez!

¡Lo voy a hacer! ¿Me oyes?

Hey, d'you want a beer?

It's hot, isn't it?

If I tell you I've only spent 2000 ptas, will you believe me?

But what stupidity!

I'm going to do it! Do you hear me?

39.4.6 Hyphens

Hyphens (*guiones*) are used very sparingly, since compound words are usually written as a single word: *latinoamericano* (not **latino-americano*), *antisubmarino* 'anti-submarine', *hispanohablante* 'Spanish-speaking', *tercermundista* 'Third-World'.

They appear between compound adjectives in which each part represents separate things or people (not the case, for example, with *hispanoamericano*). Only the second of two adjectives agrees in number and gender:

las guerras árabe-israelíes
negociaciones anglo-francesas
el complejo militar-industrial

the Arab-Israeli wars
Anglo-French negotiations
the military-industrial complex

In other cases the hyphen may be used to join two nouns:

misiles superficie-aire
la carretera Madrid-Barcelona

surface-to-air missiles
the Madrid-Barcelona road

Hyphens are sometimes printed between compound nouns of the sort *mujer policía* 'police-woman', *año luz* 'light year', but this does not conform either to the Academy's recommendation or to the best editorial practice.

39.5 Division of words at end of line

A thorough knowledge of the structure of Spanish syllables is necessary for a good pronunciation, and readers should consult manuals of phonology and phonetics for precise details. As far as word division at the end of a line is concerned, the following rules apply:

(a) The following combinations of written consonants are not divided: *ch*, *ll*, *rr*, and combinations of stops and liquids, i.e.

<i>br</i>	<i>cr</i>	<i>fr</i>	<i>gr</i>	<i>pr</i>	<i>dr</i>	<i>tr</i>
<i>bl</i>	<i>cl</i>	<i>fl</i>	<i>gl</i>	<i>pl</i>		

(b) Bearing in mind that the combinations listed under (a) count as one consonant, a single consonant is always grouped with the following vowel:

<i>ha-ba</i>	<i>ro-ca</i>	<i>nu-do</i>	<i>a-gua</i>	<i>Ma-hón</i>	<i>pe-lo</i>	<i>ra-za</i>
<i>ha-cha</i>	<i>ca-lle</i>	<i>pe-rro</i>	<i>ca-bra</i>	<i>co-fre</i>	<i>o-tro</i>	<i>co-pla</i>

and no syllable begins with more than one consonant:

<i>cal-do</i>	<i>cos-ta</i>	<i>cuan-do</i>	<i>par-te</i>
<i>can-cha</i>	<i>as-ma</i>	<i>hem-bra</i>	<i>em-ble-ma</i>
<i>com-bi-nar</i>	<i>in-na-to</i>	<i>ex-cla-mar</i>	<i>con-lle-var</i>
<i>cons-truc-ción</i>	<i>al-co-hol</i>	<i>re-hén</i>	<i>pa-guen</i>
<i>se-quí-a</i>	<i>blan-den-gue</i>	<i>re-zon-gar</i>	<i>clor-hi-dra-to</i>

It is considered inelegant to begin a line with a single vowel, so *Ate-neo*, *aé-reo* are the preferred divisions.

(c) Combinations of *i* or *u* with another vowel can be split if an accent is written on the *i* or *u*. Thus:

<i>viu-do</i>	<i>cié-na-ga</i>	<i>fiel-tro</i>	<i>can-táis</i>	<i>a-ma-bais</i>	<i>bue-no</i>
<i>ha-cia</i>	<i>re-cien-te</i>	but <i>ha-cí-a-mos</i>	<i>de-cí-ais</i>	<i>con-ti-nú-as</i>	

(d) When a prefix ending with a vowel is added to a word beginning with *r-*, the latter consonant is doubled in writing: *contrarrevolucionario* 'counter-revolutionary', *prorrogar* 'to adjourn'. If the prefix is divided from the word at the end of a line, the single *r* reappears: *contra-revolucionario*, *pro-rogar*.

Notes

(i) The above rules reflect the rules of Spanish pronunciation, but the Academy states that when a word is clearly divisible on etymological grounds it may be divided accordingly. An etymological division is preferred when the usual division does not reflect the correct pronunciation: *su-brogar* for *sub-rogar* 'to substitute' looks and sounds wrong;

Further examples: *de-sa-gra-da-ble* or *des-a-gra-da-ble* 'disagreeable', *sub-rep-ticio* (better than *su-brep-t-i-cio*) 'subreptitious', *sub-ru-ti-na* (better than *su-bru-ti-na*) 'subroutine', *sub-ra-yar* (better than *su-bra-yar*) 'to underline', *sud-a-me-ri-ca-no* or *su-da-me-ri-ca-no* 'South American', *vos-o-tros* or *vo-so-tros* 'you', etc.

(ii) Any of these rules is overridden to avoid a comic or shocking result. One does not write *sa-cerdote*, *cal-culo*, *al ser-vicio del gobierno*.

(iii) There is confusion over the combination *tl*. The rule is that it is optionally separable, except in the words *a-tlas*, *a-tle-ta* and any of their derivatives. It should also not be separated in Mexican place names of Nahuatl origin like Tenochtitlan, etc.

(iv) Foreign words should be divided according to the rules prevailing in the language of origin.

(v) Words containing the sequence *interr-* are divided thus: *in-ter-re-la-cio-na-do*.

Sources: Macpherson (1975), *Nuevas normas* (1959), Martínez de Sousa (1974), Seco (1992).

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Sources of Examples

These are too numerous to be listed individually. Many of the examples are modified versions of extracts from printed or spoken sources; these are not attributed. Attributed quotations are often from sources chosen not for their literary qualities but because they exemplify the unadorned everyday Spanish that this grammar describes. Poetry and poetic prose have been excluded. The following sources and publications are often mentioned:

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Index of English Words

References are made to section number.

The sign = should be read 'when it has the meaning of'. A preceding question mark (e.g. ?*se los dije*) indicates a questionable or disputed form.

English words not listed should be sought under their most obvious translation, e.g. 'to beat' under *pegar*.

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- 'former', 'the former the latter' 6.4.3
- 'given that' 16.12.3d
- 'go around . . . -ing' 20.8.1
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- 'happy', see *feliz*
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