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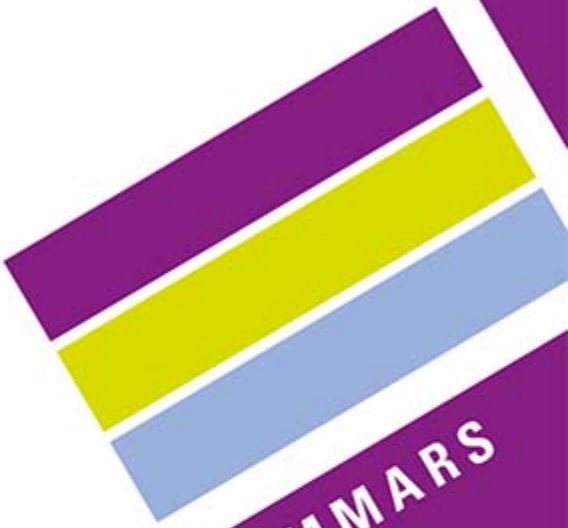

ROUTLEDGE REFERENCE GRAMMARS

SIXTH EDITION

A NEW REFERENCE GRAMMAR OF MODERN SPANISH

John Butt, Carmen Benjamin and Antonia Moreira Rodríguez

A New Reference Grammar of Modern SPANISH

A New Reference Grammar of Modern Spanish is a comprehensive, cohesive and clear guide to the forms and structures of Spanish as it is written and spoken today in Spain and Latin America. It includes clear descriptions of all the main grammatical phenomena of Spanish, and their use, illustrated by numerous examples of contemporary Spanish, both Peninsular and Latin-American, formal and informal. Fully revised and updated, the sixth edition is even more relevant to students and teachers of Spanish.

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- new chapters, providing more detail and examples of key areas of Spanish grammar;
- an increased number of Mexican examples to reflect the growing interest in this country's variety of Spanish;
- new information for readers studying Spanish and French together;
- a glossary of grammatical terms including English translations of Spanish terms.

The combination of reference grammar and manual of current usage is invaluable for learners at level B2–C2 of the Common European Framework for Languages, and Intermediate High–Advanced High on the ACTFL proficiency scales.

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Sixth Edition

John Butt, Carmen Benjamin and Antonia Moreira Rodríguez

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Preface to the Sixth Edition

This new edition of Butt and Benjamin, now Butt, Benjamin and Moreira, differs in several ways from earlier versions.

- We have created some new chapters with the result that section numbers have changed and the Index has been re-written.
- We have added a large number of Mexican examples since Mexico is by far the most populous Spanish-speaking country and its language is of special interest to North-American readers.
- We have thoroughly revised the whole text, clarified it where we found it unclear, simplified it where it was complicated, re-written or expanded it where we had new ideas or new information, and corrected it where we thought the original was misleading or inaccurate.
- We have included new information for readers who are studying Spanish and French together, this combination being especially widespread in the UK.
- We have marked as **Important** points that in our experience cause problems for English-speaking students, but this does not mean that the other notes should be neglected.
- The Glossary includes Spanish translations of grammatical terms.

Any grammar or dictionary of Spanish that aspires to be comprehensive must face the problem of the international variety of the language, a problem that is much less serious in other widely-studied European languages like French, German and Italian.

English has basically only two internationally recognized standards: American and 'received' British. No one would or should suggest that the varieties of other places like Australia, New Zealand, South-Africa, the Caribbean or India are 'bad' English, but there seems to be a more or less tacit agreement that foreigners should learn either American or 'received' British usage (in practice the language of the middle and upper classes of south-east England and of those who speak like them). There are however no universally recognized international standards in Spanish, which differs in detail between the twenty-one countries where it is the official, or the main official, language. Despite the claims one hears to the contrary, none of these different varieties is accepted as a model to be followed by the others.

It is not easy to define how much these varieties differ from one another. People who know only one variety of Spanish can usually read texts and understand films and broadcasts from other Spanish-speaking countries without noticing more than a few obvious peculiarities, especially when the material is intended for international audiences. On the other hand, local Spanish language can cause problems for outsiders, and not just for people from Spain. *El País Semanal* of 10 May 2015 describes how the late Mexican poet José Emilio Pacheco met blank incomprehension when he asked the receptionist in a Madrid hotel for 'un plomero para componer la llave de la tina' ('a plumber to fix the bath tap/faucet'); a Spaniard would have said 'un fontanero para reparar el grifo de la bañera'. Fortunately, these misunderstandings mainly affect vocabulary. The syntax of Pacheco's question is perfectly 'standard', and as far as grammar is concerned the differences between regions and countries are not striking. Spanish is still very much one language.

In order to make this book as useful as possible to students of all the varieties of Spanish, we have selected the Latin-American content in line with the policy of previous editions of this book

of quoting examples which, unless otherwise stated, are also good European Spanish and therefore worthy of imitation by readers studying the language of Spain as well as of Latin America. We usually in fact include Latin-American examples that show that their language is the same as that of Spain and that their syntax is therefore presumably acceptable everywhere or almost everywhere.

However, we cannot guarantee that all our examples of European Spanish are good Latin-American Spanish, particularly as far as their vocabulary is concerned. Translating the Spanish of Spain into 'Latin-American Spanish' is often impossible because there is no single 'Latin-American Spanish'. To cite one well-known example, 'pavement'/'sidewalk' is *la acera* in Spain and some parts of Latin America, *la vereda* in the Southern Cone, *el andén* in Colombia, *la banqueta* in Mexico and, according to the dictionaries, *la orilla* in some other American republics, and there may be other regional words that we do not know.

As far as the language of the examples is concerned, we have tried to confine ourselves to plain everyday Spanish prose that can loosely be described as 'educated informal'. However, we include a good deal of information about popular Spanish syntax since learners are bound to encounter it in films, novels and everyday conversation and they will need to know about whether to imitate it or not.

The dividing line between syntax and lexicon is blurred in any language, and this book contains a number of points that are really more appropriate for a dictionary than for a grammar book. But lack of space prevents us from competing with dictionaries when it comes to defining meanings, so when in doubt readers should check our translations – particularly those of individual words – in a good Spanish-English dictionary.

The difference between British and American English has also sometimes caused us some anxiety, and we hope that our British dialect will not cause too much trouble across the Atlantic. We sometimes supply American equivalents of our British English where we think that the latter may cause confusion, for example 'torch'/US 'flashlight', 'potato crisps'/US 'chips', but we have not been systematic about this because we are not fluent in American English. We also hope that American readers will forgive our spellings such as 'colour', 'neighbour', 'centre', 'metre', 'defence', 'traveller', 'cancelled', 'to fulfil', 'to practise' (the noun in Britain is 'practice'), 'preterite' and other British forms.

Carmen Benjamin has retired from the fray after many years of hard labour on the previous editions and Antonia Moreira has brought a fresh pair of eyes and ears to the project and made countless valuable suggestions. We are especially grateful to Mikko Takala, whose computer wizardry more than once rescued us in moments of frustration. We again offer our heartfelt thanks to the many persons, English-speaking and Spanish-speaking, who have contributed to this book over the years – and particularly to Carmen Benjamin – but as always the authors alone are responsible for any errors or omissions.

John Butt
Antonia Moreira Rodríguez
London UK, 2018

Abbreviations and conventions

NGLE: *Nueva gramática de la lengua española*, 2 vols, Real Academia Española (Madrid 2009). A third volume on phonetics and phonology appeared in 2011.
GDLE: *Gramática descriptiva de la lengua española*, Ignacio Bosque and Violeta Demonte eds, 3 vols, Real Academia Española (Madrid 1999)
DPD: *Diccionario panhispánico de dudas*, Real Academia Española (Madrid 2005)
Esbozo: *Esbozo de una nueva gramática de la lengua española*, 13th edition, Real Academia Española (Madrid 1991)
CORPES: Real Academia Española: *Banco de datos (CORPES) [en línea].Corpus del español del siglo XXI*. http://www.rae.es
CREA: Real Academia Española: *Banco de datos (CREA.Versión anotada) [en línea].Corpus de referencia del español actual* http://www.rae.es

Arg. Argentina
Bol. Bolivia
Col. Colombia
CR Costa Rica
Ch. Chile
Cu. Cuba
Dom. Rep. Dominican Republic
Ec. Ecuador
ES El Salvador
Guat. Guatemala
Hon. Honduras
Mex. Mexico
Nic. Nicaragua
Pan. Panama
Par. Paraguay
Pe. Peru
PR Puerto Rico
Sp. Spain
Ur. Uruguay
Ven. Venezuela

Lat. Am. Latin America(n)
S. Cone: Southern Cone (Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and Paraguay)
(f.), (fem.) feminine
lit. literally
(m.), (masc.) masculine
n: any number, as in 'n days', *dentro de n días*
plur. plural
sing. singular
/ indicates alternatives with the same or very similar meaning, e.g. *en vano/en balde* 'in vain', *yo no sabía que fuera/fuese verdad* 'I didn't know it was true', or alternatives that are possible translations, e.g. *su libro* = 'her/his/your/their book', 'I went' = *fui/iba/he ido*.

One or more asterisks before an example show that it is badly formed and should be avoided, e.g. *produció (for *produjo*), **el mujer.

A preceding question mark shows that the form is controversial or doubtful: ?*se los dije*, ?*habían muchos alumnos*.

Bracketed items in unattributed quotations can be deleted without a significant change of meaning, as in *debe (de) ser el cartero* 'it must be the postman'.

'Colloquial' refers to language that is acceptable in relaxed educated speech but avoided in formal situations. 'Familiar' describes language that may be heard even from educated speakers in informal situations but should be used cautiously by non-fluent foreigners. 'Popular' describes forms that some speakers may reject as 'uneducated' and which foreign learners should avoid.

'Dialogue' shows that the words quoted are spoken by fictional characters whose opinions and language, which are sometimes comical, sexist or in some other way outrageous, should not be attributed to their author.

We use the term 'Latin America(n)' rather than 'Spanish America(n)' since it should be obvious that we are not referring to Brazil or to the French-speaking territories, and because the term 'Spanish American' potentially annoys Latin Americans as much as 'British American' would no doubt irritate Americans and Canadians.

The spelling of Spanish words reflects the Spanish Academy's latest recommendations, especially noticeable in such words as *guion* for *guión*, *rio* for *rió*, *crie* for *crié*, etc. (see 44.2.4). In the case of unresolved disputes, e.g. whether one should write an accent on the pronouns *este/éste*, *ese/ése* and *aquel/aquél* and on the adverb *solo/sólo*, we show both forms but recommend the Academy's advice, which is to omit the accent.

On hearing, out of context, a verb form like *habla* 'she/he/you/it speak(s)', Spanish-speakers do not automatically form a mental image of a male grammatical subject. For this reason we translate such forms by '(s)he speaks' even though the other possibilities – 'you speak' (*usted*) and 'it speaks' – are not usually shown. If only 'she' or 'he' appears in the translation of an attributed example this reflects the gender of the character in the original text. When a third-person plural verb appears without a pronoun, e.g. *reciben* 'they receive', it must be remembered that the translation could also be 'you receive' (*ustedes reciben*) if the meaning of the sentence or phrase allows it.

Phonetic Symbols

Spanish pronunciation is roughly indicated as follows. Previous editions adopted the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), but some IPA signs were confusing for students:

Symbol	Phonetic description	Remarks
β	voiced bilabial fricative	Air released steadily through lips held as for English b
χ	voiceless velar fricative	Like *ch* of German *lachen* or of Scottish 'loch'
γ	voiced velar fricative	Air released steadily through the throat held as for English *g* in 'ago'
θ	voiceless interdental fricative	Like *th* of 'think'
ð	voiced interdental fricative	Like *th* of 'this'
ʎ	voiced palatal lateral	Palatalized *l*, as in Spanish *llamo*. Tongue flat against roof of mouth
ñ	voiced palatal nasal	Like *gn* in French *cognac*. Tongue flat against roof of mouth (IPA ɲ)
ŋ	voiced velar nasal	Like *ng* in American and Southern British 'sing' (not as in 'finger')
ɾ	voiced alveolar tap or flap	*r* pronounced with a single flap of the tongue as in Spanish *caro*
rr	voiced alveolar trill	Rolled *r* as in Spanish *carro* (IPA r)
y	voiced palatal approximant	Like *y* in 'yes' (IPA j)
ch	voiceless palatal stop	Like *ch* in 'mischief' (IPA tʃ)

A dash separates syllables and the stressed syllable is marked with an accent: [a-βlá-mos] = *hablamos*; see 44.5.

[aw] is like the 'ow' in English 'cow'; [ay] is like the 'i' in English 'high'; [ey] is like the 'ay' in 'hay'; [oy] is like the 'oy' of 'boy'; [ew] is like the 'e' of 'egg' followed by 'w'; [w] is the English 'w' but with well-rounded lips. Other signs should be given their usual Spanish pronunciation.

[ñ] must be distinguished in pronunciation from [ny] as in words like *uranio* [u-ɾá-nyo] 'uranium' and *huraño* [u-ɾá-ño] 'grumpy'/'unsociable'.

[ʎ] must be distinguished from [ly] in words like *pollo* [pó-ʎo] 'chicken' (for cooking) and *polio* [pó-lyo] 'polio' (the disease).

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1 Gender of nouns

The main points discussed in this chapter are

- Gender of nouns referring to humans and some animals (Section 1.2)
- Gender of nouns referring to lifeless things, plants and other animals (Section 1.3)
- The gender of foreign words (Section 1.3.12)
- Doubtful genders (Section 1.3.15)
- Misleading genders of some French nouns (Section 1.4)

1.1 Gender of nouns: general

Spanish nouns are either masculine or feminine except for a few nouns of undecided gender listed at 1.3.15. The whole question of the gender of Spanish nouns becomes clearer if we divide them into two groups:

(A) Nouns that refer to human beings and to a few well-known animals: Section 1.2.

(B) Nouns that refer to lifeless things, to plants and to the animals not included in group A: Section 1.3.

1.2 Group A: gender of nouns referring to human beings and to a few animals

As one might expect, nouns that denote males are masculine, and nouns referring to females are feminine, so *el hombre* 'man', *la mujer* 'woman', *el toro* 'bull', *la vaca* 'cow'. This rule applies to almost all human beings but only to a few animals, many of them listed in 1.2.1. The gender of other animals is discussed at 1.3.1.

The gender of the nouns in group A is more logical in Spanish than in French, where the masculine noun *le professeur* can refer to a woman. Forms like *la recluta* 'recruit', *la centinela* 'sentry' were applied to men in the past, but we now say *el recluta*, *el centinela* for a man and *la recluta*, *la centinela* for a woman.

Exceptions: a few nouns of fixed gender like *la víctima* or *la celebridad* may refer to males or to females: see 1.2.11 for a list.

(1) Note that usually the plural masculine form of these nouns is used for mixed sex groups: *los gatos* = 'cats' as well as 'tom cats', *mis tíos* = 'my aunt(s) and uncle(s)' as well as 'my uncles', *los padres* = 'parents' as well as 'fathers'. See 1.2.8.

1.2.1 Special forms for male and female

As in English, some nouns have special forms for the male and for the female and they must be learned separately. The following list is not exhaustive:

el abad/la abadesa abbot/abbess
el actor/la actriz actor/actress
el barón/la baronesa baron/baroness
el caballo/la yegua stallion/mare

el león/la leona lion/lioness
*el carnero/la oveja** ram/ewe (or sheep)
el conde/la condesa count/countess
el duque/la duquesa duke/duchess
el elefante/la elefanta elephant
el emperador/la emperatriz emperor/empress
*el gallo/la gallina** cockerel/hen (or chicken)
el héroe/la heroína hero/heroine (or heroin)
el hombre/la mujer man (see note 2)
el jabalí/la jabalina wild boar
el marido/la mujer husband/wife (or woman)
el padre/la madre father/mother
el príncipe/la princesa prince/princess
el rey/la reina king/queen
el sacerdote/la sacerdotisa priest/priestess
*el toro/la vaca** bull/cow
el varón (human) or *el macho* (animals)/*la hembra* male/female
el yerno/la nuera son/daughter-in-law (*la yerna* is heard in parts of Lat. America)

(1) Asterisks mark a feminine form which is also used for the species, e.g. *las ovejas* = 'sheep' as well as 'ewes'. Usually the masculine plural is used for the species. See 1.2.8.

(2) In Latin America 'wife' is *la esposa* and 'woman' is *la mujer*. In Spain *la mujer* means both things and *la esposa* is formal and polite, and *El País* of Spain encourages its use for 'wife'. An unmarried partner is *la pareja* (for either sex) or *el compañero/la compañera.* For more on *la pareja* see 1.2.11.

(3) *Papá* and *mamá* are constantly used in Latin America for 'father' and 'mother' even in quite formal speech. The words *padre* and, especially, *madre* have become somewhat discredited in Latin America, particularly in Mexico, where *padre* is a colloquial adjective meaning 'fantastic'/'great' and *madre* has many not very respectable uses which should be sought in a dictionary.

1.2.2 Feminine of nouns in group A ending in *–o*

Nearly all of these make their feminine in *-a*:

*el abuel**o**/la abuel**a*** grandfather/grandmother
el burro/la burra donkey
el amigo/la amiga friend
el candidato/la candidata candidate
el cerdo/la cerda pig/sow (Spain)
el chancho/la chancha pig/sow (Lat. Am.)
el ciervo/la cierva deer/doe
el ganso/la gansa gander/goose
el gato/la gata cat/she-cat
el hermano/la hermana brother/sister
el lobo/la loba wolf /she-wolf
el médico/la médica doctor
el novio/la novia boyfriend/girlfriend, also 'groom' and 'bride'
el oso/la osa bear/she-bear
el pato/la pata duck
el pavo/la pava turkey
el perro/la perra dog/bitch
el tío/la tía uncle/aunt
el zorro/la zorra fox/vixen

Exceptions: a few nouns ending in *-o* that refer to professions or activities do not have special feminine forms, so gender is shown by an article or adjective as in *un soldado* 'a soldier', *un**a** soldado* 'a female soldier', *modelos frances**as*** 'female French models'. Other examples:

el/la árbitro (or *la árbitra*) referee
el/la cabo corporal
el/la miembro member (of a club, etc.)
el/la piloto (rarely *la pilota*) pilot/racing driver
el/la reo accused (in court)
el/la sargento sergeant (but see 1.2.7)
el/la soprano soprano
el/la testigo witness

1.2.3 Feminine of nouns in Group A whose masculine form ends in *-or, -ón, -ín, -és, -án*

These add *-a*, and any accent written on the last vowel disappears:

el asesor/la asesora adviser/consultant
el burgués/la burguesa bourgeois
el campeón/la campeona champion
el capitán/la capitana captain

el doctor/la doctora doctor
el anfitrión/la anfitriona host/hostess
el león/la leona lion/lioness
el bailarín/la bailarina dancer
el peatón/la peatona pedestrian
el profesor/la profesora teacher (see note 1)
el programador/la programadora programmer

For adjectives like *cortés*, *preguntón*, *pillín* see 5.2.1.

(1) *El profesor/la profesora* = 'secondary school or university teacher', *el maestro/la maestra* = 'primary school-teacher', although in Spain nowadays the fashion is to call all of them *profesores/as.* A British professor is *un/una catedrático/a.*

1.2.4 Feminine of nouns in Group A whose masculine form ends in *a*

These do not change:

el/la artista artist
el/la astronauta astronaut
el/la atleta athlete
el/la brigada (roughly) warrant officer in the Navy, Air Force or Civil Guard
el/la cabecilla ringleader
el/la colega colleague
el/la guardia policeman/woman. See note 2.
el/la guía guide (*la guía* also = 'guidebook')
el/la pianista pianist
el/la policía policeman/woman (*la policía* also = 'police'). See note 2.
el/la psiquiatra psychiatrist

(1) *El modist**o*** for *el modista* 'male fashion designer' is heard in Spain: *todo las separa . . . incluso los modist**o**s* (*El Mundo*, Sp.) 'everything stands between them . . . even fashion designers'. The Academy (DPD, 441) accepts it but Seco and *El País* reject it. *La modista* also means 'dressmaker'.

(2) In Spain *guardias* and *policías* are not the same. The *Guardia Civil* deals with rural policing, frontiers, etc. The *Policía Nacional* polices urban areas, and there are also municipal and regional police forces like the Basque *Ertzaintza* and the Catalan *Mossos d'Esquadra*. Latin-American republics may also have complex policing systems.

1.2.5 Feminine of nouns in Group A whose masculine ends in *-nte*

The majority do not change:

el/la adolescente adolescent
el/la agente police officer/agent
el/la amante lover
el/la cantante singer
el/la representante representative
el/la televidente TV viewer
el/la teniente lieutenant
el/la transeúnte passer-by

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

el asistente/la asistenta assistant, daily help
el dependiente/la dependienta shop assistant/US 'sales clerk'
el principiante/la principianta beginner
el sirviente/la sirvienta servant
el comediante/la comedianta comic actor
el pariente/la parienta relative (*la parienta* is also humorous for 'wife')

(1) *El/la asistente social* 'social worker', *la asistente social* (the usual form) or *la asistenta social* for a woman. *La asistenta* is usual in Spain for 'domestic help'.

(2) *La presidente* 'president' is found, but *la presidenta* is recommended by Seco (1998) and is now very widespread.

(3) Forms like **la estudianta* for *la estudiante* are considered substandard, but a few popular nouns/adjectives may form their feminine in *-nta*: *el atorrante/la atorranta* (Lat. Am.) 'tramp'/'slacker'/US 'bum', *dominanta* 'bossy'/'pushy' (applied to women). For *la clienta* see 1.2.7 note 1.

1.2.6 Feminine of other nouns in Group A whose masculine form ends in *-e* or in a consonant

Apart from those mentioned in the preceding sections, these do not change:

el/la alférez second lieutenant
el/la barman (Sp.) barman/barmaid
el/la cónyuge spouse
el/la enlace representative
el/la intérprete interpreter
el/la joven young man/young woman
el/la líder political leader*
el/la mártir martyr
el/la rehén hostage
el/la tigre (or *la tigresa*) tiger

Exceptions: *el huésped/la huéspeda* 'guest' (more usually *la huésped*, which the Academy recommends), *el monje/la monja* 'monk'/'nun', *el sastre/la sastra* 'tailor'. For *la jefa* see 1.2.7.

(1) **La lideresa* is approved by the Academy for a female political leader, but most people say *la líder.*

1.2.7 Feminine forms of nouns referring to professions

As the social status of women improves, the stigma once attached to some feminine forms of professions is vanishing. The following should be noted:

- ***El/la abogado*** 'lawyer'. The form *la abogada* is now widely accepted, but it originally meant 'intercessionary saint'.
- ***La clienta*** 'female customer' is increasingly accepted, at least in Spain, but *la cliente* is also heard.
- ***El/la jefe***: *la jefa* is accepted by *El País* as the feminine of *el/la jefe* 'boss', but it sounds too familiar for some people. García Márquez (Col.) writes *Maruja había sido . . . jef**e** de relaciones públicas* 'Maruja had been head of public relations'.
- ***El/la juez*** 'judge' – the preferred form in Spain, Mexico and Peru: *El País* insists on *la juez*. Elsewhere in Latin America *la jueza* is not uncommon for a female judge. The Academy accepts *la jueza* and it is widespread in speech everywhere.
- ***El médico*** 'doctor': *la médica* is normal in much of Latin America, cf. *una médica blanca sudafricana* (*Granma*, Cu.) 'a white South-African female doctor', but *Emilia Saura, la médic**o** sin hospital* (AM, Mex.) 'ES, the doctor without a hospital'. *El País* and the Academy approve of *la médica* and it is gaining ground though some people still considerate it slightly disrespectful. *La doctora* is polite alternative for a woman doctor. The Academy rejects *la médico*.
- ***El/la miembro*** 'member' (of clubs), also *el socio/la socia*. The *NGLE* 2.9f approves of *la miembro*.
- ***El/la ministro*** 'minister', but *la ministra* is usual nowadays. *El País* and the Academy recommend *la primera ministra* over *la primer ministro* 'prime minister' although it logically means 'the first female minister'.
- ***La poeta*** is now preferred to *la poetisa* 'poetess'.
- ***La política*** is accepted by the *NGLE* 2.6g for a female politician; it also means 'politics'. ***La informática*** is a female IT expert; it also means 'computing'.

- ***La sacerdotisa*** is a possible feminine of *el sacerdote* 'priest', mainly used for ancient religions. The *NGLE* notes the increasing use of *la sacerdote* for female (i.e. non-Roman Catholic) priests.
- ***La sargenta*** is used to mean a bad-tempered, fierce woman, so *la sargento* is a female sergeant.

Other nouns ending in *-o* may be regular: *el arquitecto/la arquitecta* 'architect', *el biólogo/la bióloga* 'biologist', *el catedrático/la catedrática* 'professor' (European meaning), *el filósofo/la filósofa* 'philosopher', *el letrado/la letrada* 'counsel'/'legal representative', *el sociólogo/la socióloga* 'sociologist', etc. Nevertheless, forms like *la arquitecto*, *la filósofo*, *la letrado* may be preferred in Spain. *La magistrada* 'judge' (higher in rank than a British magistrate) is now usual.

(1) Feminine forms are often used, even in educated speech, when the woman is not listening: *¿qué tal te llevas con la nueva jef**a**?* 'how are you getting on with your new woman boss?', but *me han dicho que usted es la jef**e** 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 the rare exceptions noted at 1.2.1, the masculine plural refers either to males or to both sexes, which confuses English-speakers. *Mis hijos* means 'my sons' or 'my children'; *mis hermanos* means 'my brothers' or 'my brother(s) and sister(s)'. The answer to *¿tienes hermanos?* might be *tengo dos hermanos y una hermana* 'I've got two brothers and one sister'. Likewise *hoy vienen los padres de los niños* 'the children's **parents** are coming today'. 'The children's fathers are coming' would have to be clarified by *vienen los padres de los niños—los padres solos* = 'the fathers on their own'. Further examples:

los alumnos students/male students
los ingleses the English/English men
los niños children/little boys
los perros dogs/male dogs
los primos cousins/male cousins
los profesores teachers/male teachers
los reyes the King and the Queen/kings/the kings and queens

(1) Feminine nouns refer to females only, so one uses the masculine in sentences like *no tengo más amig**os** que mujeres* 'the only friends I have are women' or *todos los profesor**es** son mujeres* 'all the teachers are women'. ?*No tengo más amigas que mujeres* means 'the only women friends I have are women'! *Tú eres la más inteligente de tod**os*** 'you're the most intelligent of all' is a better compliment to a woman than *. . .de tod**as*** since the feminine excludes males. But a sentence like *María es la mejor profesora del instituto* 'Maria's the best teacher in the school' is ambiguous: it 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 nineteenth-century Spanish literature' is assumed to mean that she is better than everybody. If 'the best female interpreter' were meant one would say *intérprete femenina*.

(2) Care must be taken with words like *uno*, *otro*. If a woman from Madrid says *todos los madrileños me caen gordos* 'all Madrid people get on my nerves' one could reply *¡pero tú eres un**o** de ell**o**s!* 'but you're one of them!', but not * *. . . una de ellos*, since *madrileños* includes both males and females (*¡pero tú también eres madrileña!* avoids the problem). Compare also *Ana es un**a** de las profesor**as*** 'Ana is one of the women teachers' and *Ana es un**o** de los profesor**es*** 'Ana is one of the teachers'. In a few 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'.

(3) The fact that the masculine includes the feminine irritates some feminists since a phrase like *oportunidades para alumnos de química* 'opportunities for students of chemistry' does not clearly

include females, so in notices and pamphlets one sometimes sees *alumn@s*, *candidat@s*, etc. *L@s alumn@s* is a gender-neutral (and unpronounceable) way of writing *los alumnos y las alumnas* 'male and female students'. The Academy disapproves of this use of @.

1.2.9 Gender of nouns denoting non-living things when they are applied to humans

Feminine nouns that usually apply to lifeless things can sometimes be applied to human males. In this case the noun acquires masculine gender:

	Applied to a male	
una bala perdida stray bullet	*un bala perdida*	ne'er-do-well/waster
una bestia wild beast	*un bestia*	beast/brute/lunatic
la cabeza rapada shaved head	*un cabeza rapada*	skinhead
la cámara camera	*el cámara*	cameraman
la primera clase first class	*un primera clase*	someone first-class
la superventa top sale	*el superventa*	top seller
la trompeta trumpet	*el trompeta*	trumpet player

These feminine words can be applied to females: *la trompeta* = 'trumpet' or 'female trumpet player'.

1.2.10 Gender of names applied across sex boundaries

A female's 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 with skirts'.

1.2.11 Nouns of invariable gender applied to either sex

Some common words applied to human beings do not change their gender. One says ***el** bebé está enfermo* 'the baby is ill' whatever its sex, although *la bebé* or *la bebe* is nowadays commonly heard for baby girl: *una bebé muere al recibir un fármaco prescrito a su madre* (*El País*, Sp.) 'baby girl dies after receiving drug prescribed for mother' (*la beba* is heard in the Southern Cone). Some words of common gender are:

el ángel angel
una calamidad calamity
una celebridad celebrity
un cerebrín genius/'brainy' person
un desastre disaster
un esperpento fright/weird-looking person
la estrella star (TV, etc.)
un genio genius
un ligue date/casual boy or girlfriend
una lumbrera genius
la pareja unmarried partner. See note 2
la persona person
el personaje character (in novels, etc.)
una pesadilla nightmare
(*eres*) *un sol* you're wonderful/an angel
la víctima victim

and a few other masculine nouns can be used to refer to women, most of them, involving sexual innuendo or comparisons with objects, cf. *el pendón* 'trollop'/'slut' (lit. 'pennant', also *la pendona*), *el marimacho* 'tomboy', etc.

(1) Titles like *Alteza* 'Highness', *Excelencia*, *Ilustrísima* 'Grace' (title of bishops) and *Majestad* 'Majesty' are feminine, but the person addressed keeps his/her gender: *Su Majestad estará cansad**o***

(to a king), 'Your Majesty must be tired'. This particularly applies to the phrase *su señoría* used in the Spanish parliaments to address other members of the two houses and for judges.

(2) *La pareja* is used even for a male partner**,** but note s*u pareja es español* (*El Periódico*, Sp., 8-3-15) 'her (male) partner is Spanish'. *Compañero/compañera* are also used for unmarried partners, sometimes clarified by adding *sentimental*, but *pareja* is becoming more common.

1.3 Group B: Gender of nouns referring to animals not included under 1.2 and to lifeless things and to plants

1.3.1 Nouns referring to animals not included under 1.2.1–11

Nouns referring to most of the animals not included in the preceding sections are of fixed, arbitrary gender which must be learned separately. The gender of the noun has nothing to do with the sex of the animal:

la araña spider	*el gorila* gorilla	*el panda* panda
la babosa slug	*la hormiga* ant	*el puma* puma
la ballena whale	*la mariposa* butterfly	*la rana* frog
el canguro kangaroo	*el mirlo* blackbird	*el sapo* toad
el chimpancé chimpanzee	*la mofeta/el zorrillo* skunk	*la víbora* viper
la cucaracha cockroach	*la nutria* otter	*la vicuña* vicuna

and many others which will be found in good dictionaries.

(1) One can make an animal's sex clear by adding *macho* 'male' or *hembra* 'female': *la ardilla macho* 'male squirrel', *el cangrejo hembra* 'female crab'. In good Spanish, an adjective agrees with the gender of the noun not of the animal itself: *la rana macho está muert**a*** 'the male frog is dead', *un cisne hembra blanc**o*** 'a white female swan'. *Macho* and *hembra* are invariable: *las cebras macho* 'male zebras', *los gavilanes hembra* 'female sparrowhawks.

Familiar language may say things like *el/la gorila* 'he-gorilla' and 'she-gorilla' (properly invariably *el gorila*).

(2) *La canguro* ('she-kangaroo') is used in Spain for a female child-minder or baby-sitter.

1.3.2 Gender of nouns referring to non-living things, to plants and to other animals

The gender of nouns referring to non-living things, to plants and to the animals mentioned in 1.3.1 must be learned for each noun. It has no sexual implications and it sometimes varies from place to place: cf. *sauna* 'sauna', feminine in Spain, either gender in Latin America; *sartén* 'frying pan'/US 'skillet', feminine in Spain, often masculine in Latin America. The gender of some nouns also occasionally changes with time: cf. seventeenth-century *la puente*, now *el puente* 'bridge' (occasionally still *la puente* in some regions). *El maratón* and *la maratón* 'marathon' are both current nowadays: *El País* insists on *el maratón.*

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

1.3.3 **Masculine by meaning**

Some of these have acquired the gender of an underlying omitted noun:

(**a**) Rivers (*el río*): *el Amazonas* 'the Amazon', *el Jarama*, *el Manzanares*, *el Sena* 'the 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*): *los Alpes*, *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 Toyota*, *un Mercedes*, *el caza* 'fighter plane', *el Queen Elizabeth*, *el Marie Celeste*, *un DC10*, *un Mig-31*. But small boats (*la barca*) are usually feminine, as are light aircraft because of the 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* 'Monday', *un viernes frío* 'a cold Friday', etc.

(**e**) Wines (*el vino*): *el Borgoña* 'Burgundy', *el Chianti*, *un Rioja*, *el champaña* 'champagne', usually *el champán* in spoken Spanish, but *la champaña* in Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela. *El cava* is used to refer to champagne made in Spain.

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

(**g**) Sports teams (*el equipo*): *el Barça* 'Barcelona FC' **(**pronounced [báɾ-sa]), *el Betis* **(**one of Seville's soccer teams), *el Real Madrid*, etc.

(**h**) All infinitives, and all quoted words: *el fumar* 'smoking', *el escupir* 'spitting', '"*mujer" es femenin**o*** '(the word) '"*mujer*" is feminine', *no viene la señal, el "siga" que él esperaba* (EP, Mex.) 'the signal doesn't come, the "go on" that he was expecting'.

(**i**) Any adverb, interjection or other genderless word used as a noun: *el más allá* 'the Beyond', *un algo* 'a "something"', *tiene un no sabe uno qué que gusta* (LRS, Puerto Rico, dialogue) 'she's got something or other pleasing about her'.

(**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 ocre* 'ochre'; *se amplía el naranja del horizonte* 'the orange of the horizon is spreading' (AG, Sp.), *mandaron instalar una alfombra verde aunque no hiciera juego con el rosa pálido de las paredes* (ES, Mex.) 'they had a green carpet laid even though it didn't match the pale pink of the walls'.

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

el almendro/la almendra almond
el avellano/la avellana hazel
el castaño/la castaña chestnut
el cerezo/la cereza cherry
el ciruelo/la ciruela plum
el granado/la granada pomegranate
el guayabo/la guayaba guava
el guindo/la guinda morello cherry
el mandarino/la mandarina tangerine
el manzano/la manzana apple
el naranjo/la naranja orange
el nogal/la nuez walnut. See note 2
el papayo/la papaya papaya
el peral/la pera pear

(1) Some fruits are masculine: *el aguacate* 'avocado' (*la palta* south of Ecuador), *el albaricoque* 'apricot', *el higo* 'fig', *el limón* 'lemon', *el melón* 'melon', etc. 'A banana' is *una banana* for most Latin Americans, but *un plátano* in some regions and in Spain. *Plátano* also means 'plane-tree' in Spain, so 'banana tree' is *el plátano bananero.*

(2) 'Nuts' in general are *los frutos secos*. However, in Latin America *las nueces* can be used for 'nuts', cf. *cuando está comprando nueces, debe elegir los tipos más populares como almendras, manís, pacanas y nueces de nogal* (Colombian cookery book) 'when buying nuts you should choose the most popular kinds like almonds, peanuts, pecans and walnuts'. *El maní* = *el cacahuete* in Spain.

1.3.4 Masculine by form

(**a**) Nouns ending in *-o* are usually masculine: *el colegio* 'school', *el libro* 'book', *el macro* 'macro' (in computing), *el resguardo* 'receipt'/'payslip' (e.g. from an ATM), *el trampantojo* 'illusion'/'trick'. There are a few exceptions, some of them important:

la nao ship (archaic)
la dinamo dynamo (*el dínamo* in Lat. Am.)
la disco disco
la foto photo
la Gestapo the Gestapo
la libido libido
la magneto magneto (frequently masc.)
la mano hand (dim. *la manita* or *la manito*)
la moto motorbike
la polio polio

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

el equipaje luggage
el paisaje landscape
el calor heat
el color colour
el amor love
el sofá sofa/couch
el paisaje landscape
el azafrán crocus/saffron
el desván attic
el calambre spasm/cramp
el enjambre swarm
Canadá (masc.) Canada
el rubí ruby
el champú shampoo
el tisú tissue (e.g. Kleenex)

Exceptions: *la flor* 'flower', *la labor* 'labour'. *El hambre* 'hunger' is also feminine: see 3.1.2 for an explanation of the *el*. Forms like *la calor*, *la color* for *el calor* 'heat' and *el color* 'colour' are heard in regional dialects. *Pelambre* 'mop or tuft of hair' is usually feminine, but sometimes masculine.

(1) *La radio* 'radio' is feminine in Spain and in the Southern Cone, but in Mexico, Cuba, Central America and northern parts of South America it is usually, but not always, *el radio*. In some places *el radio* is 'radio set' and *la radio* is 'radio station'. *El radio* also everywhere means 'radius' and 'radium'. In García Márquez's *Noticia de un secuestro* (Col., 1996) *el radio* and *la radio* are used for 'radio' with about equal frequency.

(2) *El porno* is masculine even though it comes from *la pornografía*: *detenido T., el rey del porno español* (*El Periódico*, Sp.) 'T., king of Spanish porn, arrested'.

1.3.5 Common masculine nouns ending in *-a*

There is no rule in Spanish that says that nouns ending in *-a* must be feminine. Many nouns ending in *-ma* and several others ending in *-a* are masculine:

(**a**) Masculine nouns ending in *-a* (for masculine nouns ending in *-ma* see list **b**):

el alerta alert (*el alerta rojo* 'red alert' or *la alerta*)
el bocata familiar in Spain for 'sandwich'/'baguette'(*el bocadillo*)

el burka burka
el busca bleeper/pager
el caza fighter plane
el cólera cholera
el cometa comet (*la cometa* = 'kite', the toy)
el día day
el ébola ebola (the disease)
el escucha listening device/'bug'
el extra extra payment
el giga gig(abyte)
el gorila gorilla
el guardarropa cloakroom
el Himalaya the Himalayas
el insecticida insecticide (and all chemicals ending in *-icida*)
el karma karma
el manga Manga comic
el mañana the morrow/tomorrow (*la mañana* = 'morning')
el lempira Honduran unit of currency
el mapa map
el mediodía noon
el mega meg(abyte)
el nirvana Nirvana
el panda panda
el planeta planet
el Sáhara. See note 1.
el telesilla ski-lift (but *la silla* 'chair')
el tequila tequila (the Academy rejects *la tequila*)
el vodka vodka (rarely fem.)
el tranvía tram/tramway
el yoga yoga
el zika zika (the mosquito-borne disease)

(**b**) Masculine nouns ending in *-ma*

The following words are masculine, in most cases because the Greek words they are derived from are of neuter gender. This list is not exhaustive:

el (or *la*) *anatema* anathema
el anagrama anagram
el aroma aroma
el cisma schism
el clima climate
el coma coma (*la coma* = 'comma')
el crisma holy oil (but *te rompo la crisma* 'I'll knock your block off!')
el crucigrama crossword
el diagrama diagram
el dilema dilemma
el diploma diploma
el dogma dogma
el drama drama
el eccema/el eczema eczema
el emblema emblem
el enigma enigma
el esquema scheme
el estigma stigma
el fantasma ghost
el genoma genome
el holograma hologram
el lema slogan/watchword
el magma magma
el miasma miasma
el panorama panorama
el pijama pyjamas (see note 2)
el plasma plasma
el poema poem
el prisma prism
el problema problem
el programa program(me)
el puma puma
el reúma rheumatism (fem. in Mexico. Also *reuma*)
el síntoma symptom
el sistema system
el telegrama telegram puzzle
el tema theme/topic/subject
el trauma trauma

and most other scientific or technical words ending in *-ma*. But *la amalgama* 'amalgam', *el asma* 'asthma' (feminine, see 3.1.2 for the *el*), *la estratagema* 'stratagem' and *la flema* 'phlegm' are feminine. For other feminine words ending in *-ma* see 1.3.8.

(1) *El Sáhara* 'the Sahara', pronounced as though written *sájara*, has more or less replaced the older form *el Sahara* (pronounced [sa-á-ra]). *El País* rejects the latter form.

(2) 'Pyjamas'/US 'pajamas' is *la pajama* or *la piyama* in Mexico, the Caribbean and much of Central America: *en piyama te ves soñada* (EM, Mex., dialogue; Spain *pareces un sueño en pijama*) 'you look a dream in pyjamas'.

(3) A few masculine words ending in *-ma* are made feminine in popular speech, dialects and pre-nineteenth-century texts, especially *clima*, *miasma* and *fantasma*, cf. *pobre fantasma soñadora* in Lorca's *El maleficio de la mariposa*.

1.3.6 Feminine by meaning

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

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

(**b**) Letters of the alphabet (*la letra*): *una b*, *una c*, *una h*, *la delta*, *la omega*. But note *el delta* 'river delta'.

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

(**d**) Roads (*la carretera* 'road' or *la autopista* 'motorway'/'freeway'): *la N11*, *la M4*, *la Panamericana*.

(**e**) Many fruits. See 1.3.3m for a list.

For more on how an underlying noun may determine the gender of a noun see 1.3.14.

1.3.7 Feminine by form

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

la niñez childhood
la pez pitch (i.e. tar)
la vez time (as in two times)/appointment
la doblez duplicity
la pereza laziness
la acción action
la tontería foolishness
la versión version
la verdad truth
la libertad freedom
la virtud virtue
la cumbre summit
la serie series
la superficie surface
la esperanza hope
la presencia presence
la crisis crisis
la diagnosis diagnosis
la tesis thesis
la parálisis paralysis
la bronquitis bronchitis

But the following are masculine:

el ajedrez chess
el pez fish
el análisis analysis
el doblez fold/crease, also *la*
el éxtasis ecstasy
el apocalipsis apocalypse
el paréntesis bracket
el énfasis emphasis/pomposity of style

La doblez also means 'duplicity'.

1.3.8 Common feminine nouns ending in *-ma*

Many nouns ending in *-ma* are masculine (see 1.3.5b), but many are feminine. The following are common examples of feminine nouns ending in *-ma*:

*el alma** soul
*el arma** weapon
*el asma** asthma
la alarma alarm
la amalgama amalgam
la broma joke
la calma calm
la cama bed
la chusma rabble
la cima summit
la crema cream
la Cuaresma Lent
la diadema diadem/tiara
la doma breaking-in/taming
la enzima enzyme
la escama scale (fish)
la esgrima fencing (the sport)
la estima esteem
la estratagema stratagem
la fama fame
la firma firm/signature
la flema phlegm
la forma shape
la gama selection/range
la goma rubber
la lágrima teardrop
la lima file (for nails), lime (fruit)
la llama flame/llama
la loma hillock
la máxima maxim
la merma decrease
la norma norm

la palma palm	*la prima* female cousin; bonus/prize	*la marisma* marsh
la paloma dove	*la quema* burning	*la suma* sum
la pamema unnecessary fuss	*la rama* branch	*la toma* taking
la pantomima pantomime	*la rima* rhyme	*la trama* plot (of novel)
	la sima chasm/abyss	*la yema* egg yolk/fingertip

*These forms require the articles *el/un* for reasons explained at 3.1.2, but their gender remains feminine.

1.3.9 Gender of countries, provinces, regions

Countries, provinces, states or regions ending with an unstressed *-a* are almost all feminine, e.g.

la España/Francia/Argentina de hoy	Spain/France/Argentina today
la conservadora Gran Bretaña	conservative Britain
la Alemania que yo conocía	the Germany I knew

The rest are masculine: *Canadá*, *México* (often *Méjico* in Spain); *Aragón*, *Devon* (all masc.), (*el*) *Paraguay*, (*el*) *Perú*, *Tennessee* (masc.), *Nuevo Hampshire*, but *Nuev**a** Jersey.* 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. *El Sáhara* is masculine.

(1) Sentences like *todo Colombia lo sabe* 'all Colombia knows it' are however correct, especially with the adjectives *todo*, *medio*, *mismo*, etc., probably because the underlying noun is *pueblo* 'people'. Cf. *todo Piura está muerta* 'the whole of Piura is dead' (MVLl, Pe., dialogue). Compare the following, which refer to a place, not to people: *tod**a** Argentina está inundada de obras mías* (MVLl, Pe.) 'the whole of Argentina is flooded with books of mine', *un mono provoca un apagón en toda Kenia* (*El Periódico*, Sp.) 'monkey causes power outage throughout Kenya'.

1.3.10 Gender of cities, towns and villages

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

la Barcelona de ayer	the Barcelona of yesterday
el Moscú turístico	the tourist's Moscow
. . . un imaginario Buenos Aires (JLB, Arg.)	. . . an imaginary Buenos Aires

Exceptions: some cities appear to be feminine but are often treated as grammatically masculine: *Nuev**a** York* but *el Nueva York contemporáne**o*** 'modern New York', *Nueva York está llen**o** de ventanas* (IA, Sp.) 'New York is full of windows', *Nueva Orleans*, *Nueva Delhi*, *la antigua Cartago*, *Bogotá, antes de ser remodelada . . .* (Colombian press, *remodelado* is possible) 'Bogota, before it was refashioned'; and spontaneous language often makes cities feminine because of *la ciudad* 'city'. Some cities include the definite article (written with a capital letter) in their name: *El Cairo*, *La Habana* 'Havana', *La Haya* 'The Hague'.

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

(2) For *tod**o** Barcelona habla de ello* 'all Barcelona's talking about it' see 1.3.9 note 1.

1.3.11 Gender of compound nouns

These are numerous and nearly all are masculine:

el abrelatas can opener
el cazamariposas butterfly net
el lanzallamas flame-thrower
el paraguas umbrella
el sacacorchos corkscrew
el sacapuntas pencil sharpener
el saltamontes grasshopper
el salvapantallas screensaver

Exceptions: *la quitanieves* and *la tragaperras*. See 2.1.8.

(1) Compound nouns consisting of two nouns have the gender of the first noun: *el año luz* 'light year', *un perro policía* 'police dog': see 2.1.9. The gender of other compound nouns should be learned separately.

1.3.12 Gender of foreign words

Spanish is nowadays full of foreign words, many still not recognized by the Academy.

Some of them have no real Spanish equivalent, e.g.

el anorak
el bitmap
el/la blogger (or *bloguero/a*)
el Bluetooth
el bul(*l*)*dog*
el chat chatroom
el cookie (in computing)
el hackeo hacking
el router (in computing)
el selfie
el tuit, *el tuitero*, tweet, tweeter; *tuitear* to tweet

Some have official (Academy) Spanish equivalents but the English form is often preferred in speech because it is shorter or sounds 'cool':

el backup (*la copia de seguridad*)
el blog (*la bitácora*)
el bug (*el duende/el error*; in computing)
el bullying (pron. [bú-lin]) (*el acoso*)
el casting (*el seleccionamiento/la audición*)
el clipboard (*el portapapeles*)
el hard(*ware*) (*el soporte físico*)
la tablet (computing: *la tableta*)
el joystick (*la palanca de mando*)
el feedback (*la retro-alimentación*)
el firewall (*el cortafuegos*)
el soft(*ware*) (*el soporte lógico*)
el littering (*el basureo*)
el look (in fashion: *la imagen*)
el smartphone (*el teléfono inteligente*)

English borrowings in Spanish can confuse learners. Sometimes their pronunciation is unfamiliar: *el iceberg* is pronounced in Spain as [e-li-θe-βéɾ] (three syllables: for the phonetic symbols see the Preface); the *ai* of *el airbag* is pronounced like 'eye', *la* or *el wifi* is pronounced like 'wee fee', *el puzzle* is [el-púθ-le] or [pús-le].

Quite often their meaning differs from the original: *un áfter* is a bar or club that stays open after hours, *un biscuit* is made of cream and ice-cream in Spain and in Mexico is a sort of bun or muffin, *un bri*(*c*)*k* is a carton for milk or other liquids, *un escalextric* is a 'spaghetti junction', *el footing*, in Spain, is 'jogging'; *un lifting* is a 'face-lift', *un magacín* is a variety TV programme in Spain, *un piercing* is either the action or the stud or ring in the body, *la nurse* (properly *la niñera*) is paid to look after one's children, *el paddle* or *pádel* is 'paddle tennis'. According to *El País*, *esnob* in Spanish means 'an exaggerated admiration for what is fashionable' but in English it is someone who despises things or people that are 'lower class'.

Like all Spanish nouns, borrowed nouns must be masculine or feminine. Words that refer to human beings take the gender of the person: *un*(*a*) *yuppie*, *un*(*a*) *trader* and *un*(*a*) *hacker*, *la nanny*,

la miss 'beauty queen'. Words referring to non-living things may be feminine if they resemble a feminine Spanish noun in form or meaning or, sometimes, because they are feminine in the original language:

la app app (in computing)
la boutique (*la tienda*) shop/store
la chance chance (Lat. Am. only, also masc.)
la élite elite (usually pronounced [é-li-te])
la Guinness (*la cerveza*) 'beer'
la NASA (*la Agencia. . .*)
la opus in music (cf. *la obra*), but *el Opus* = Opus Dei
la pizza
la sauna sauna (often masc. in Lat. Am.)
la suite (all meanings)
la yihad Jihad (*la guerra* 'war')

But if the word is un-Spanish in spelling or ending or is not clearly related to a feminine Spanish noun, it will be masculine. The majority of foreign-looking words are therefore masculine regardless of their gender in the original language:

el affaire affair (fem. in French)
el after-shave
el audiobook
el best-seller
el big-bang
los boxes pits (in motor-racing, better *el taller*)
el burka burka
el chalet detached house
el chándal track-suit (French)
el christmas/crismas Christmas card
el copyright
el echarpe (light) scarf (fem. in French; pronounced as a Spanish word)
el eslogan advertising slogan
el fax
el film cling film/movie (latter usually *la película*)
el/la friki 'freak' (person)
el gadget
el gag joke (by a comedian)
el hardware
el jazz
el karaoke
el máster Master of Arts, Science, etc.
el módem
el office pantry/utility room
los panti(e)s tights (from 'panty-hose')
el pin badge
la performance (of motor, etc.)
el póster
el pub (a smart bar with music in Spain)
el puenting bungee-jumping
el quark
el ranking
el reality 'reality' TV show
el slip underpants
el software
el standing rank/prestige
el top (women's clothing),
el vodka vodka (also fem.)
el yoga yoga
el zombi

(1) For the phonetic transcription used in this section see the Preface.

(2) There is wide variation between the various Spanish-speaking countries as to the source and number of recent loanwords, so no universally valid list can be drawn up.

(3) The gender of *Internet* is uncertain: *El País* advocates masculine, the Academy is undecided. But *internet* is in fact mostly used as a proper noun, i.e. without an article: *lo puedes buscar en internet* 'you can look for it on the Internet', *en México 70 millones de personas no tienen acceso a internet* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'in Mexico 70 million people have no access to the Internet'. It should be stressed on the final *e.*

(4) *Web* is now usually feminine whether it means 'the web' or 'web site'. 'Browser' is *un navegador*. 'Link' is *un enlace. Wifi* can be either gender. *Las redes sociales* are 'social networks'.

1.3.13 Gender of abbreviations

This is determined by the gender of the main noun:

el ADN (*el ácido desoxirribonucleico*) DNA
el IVA (*el Impuesto de Valor Añadido*) VAT (Value Added Tax)
el ovni (*el objeto volante no identificado*) UFO

la CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) *la Agencia. . .*
la ONU (*la Organización de las Naciones Unidas*) UN
la OTAN (*La Organización del Tratado del Atlántico Norte*) NATO
la TDT (*la televisión digital terrestre*) digital TV
la UCI (*la Unidad de Cuidados Intensivos*) Intensive Care Unit
las FF.AA. (*las Fuerzas Armadas*) Armed Forces

(1) If the gender of the underlying noun is unknown or uncertain the abbreviation is masculine – e.g. *el DVD*, pronounced [dew-βe-ðé], but [di-βi-ðí] in some parts of Latin America (see the Preface for the phonetic symbols); *el GPS sistema de posicionamiento global*, but the English abbreviation is used; *el ISIS* 'Islamic State of Iraq and Syria'. But feminine gender is used if there is a good reason for it, as in *la RAF*, *la USAF* (***las*** *fuerzas aéreas* 'air force'), etc. *ETA*, the now defunct Basque separatist organization, is feminine in Castilian.

(2) For plural abbreviations like EE.UU., FF.AA. See 2.1.12.

1.3.14 Gender acquired from underlying noun (metonymic gender)

Several of the examples in this chapter have acquired the gender of another noun that has been deleted ('metonymic gender'). One says ***un*** *Rioja*, ***una*** *Budweiser*, ***una*** *Guinness* because *el vino* is masculine and *la cerveza* is feminine. This creates apparent gender errors in informal speech:

la Rey Juan Carlos = la universidad Rey Juan Carlos in Madrid
la Modelo = la Cárcel Modelo Model Jail
una HP Pavilion = una computadora HP Pavilion (but masc. in Spain, where 'computer' is *el ordenador*)
un pura sangre a thoroughbred animal. *La sangre* 'blood' is fem.
Virgi fue la número uno en el curso de cabo (LS, Sp. dialogue) 'Virgi(nia) was number one in the (Civil Guards) corporals' course

1.3.15 Doubtful genders

The gender of some words is undecided, one of the oddest being *el azúcar* 'sugar' which is masculine even though a following adjective may be of either gender: *el azúcar moreno/morena* 'brown sugar'. In the following list the more common gender is shown:

acné (preferred to *acne*) m. acne
apóstrofe m. apostrophe
bikini/biquini m. (see note 4)
chinche f. bed-bug/drawing pin
cochambre f. dirt/filth
cubalibre m. (f. in Mex., Ven., Ch.)
dote f. dowry, personal gifts (i.e. 'qualities')
duermevela m. or f. snooze/nap/light sleep
el herpes m. herpes
hojaldre m. puff pastry (Lat. Am. *la hojaldra*)
interrogante m. question
lente f. lens, but see note 2. *Las lentillas* = 'contact lenses'
linde f. boundary
maratón m. marathon
pelambre f. thick hair
pitón f. python (Academy recommends *el*)
pringue m. fat/grease/sticky dirt (*esto está pringoso* 'this is sticky')
reuma (preferred to *reúma*) m. rheumatism (fem. in Mexico)
sartén (see 1.3.17)
tilde f. written accent (i.e. ' or ~)
tizne m. soot/black smear or stain
tortícolis f. stiff neck

(1) Pre-twentieth-century texts may contain now obsolete genders, e.g. *la puente* 'bridge', *la fin* 'end', *la análisis* 'analysis', etc. For *Internet* and *Web* see 1.3.12 notes 3 and 4. For *la/el radio* see 1.3.4 note 1.

(2) Masculine gender of *lente* is common, cf. *tuve que mandar hacer otros lentes* (GZ, Mex.) 'I had to get a new pair of glasses made'. The word for eye-glasses in Spain is *las gafas* and *los anteojos* in the Southern Cone.

(3) *Duermevela* 'nap'/'short sleep' is usually feminine in Latin America and also sometimes in Spain.

(4) *Bikini* or *biquini* is normally feminine in the River Plate area: *una biquini amarilla a lunares* (*La Nación*, Arg.) 'a yellow polka-dot bikini'. It is masculine elsewhere.

1.3.16 Gender of mar 'sea'

Masculine, except in poetry, the speech of sailors and fishermen, in weather forecasts and in nautical terms (*la pleamar/la bajamar* 'high/low tide', *la mar llana/picada* 'calm/choppy sea', *hacerse a la mar* 'to put to sea', *en alta mar* 'on the high seas', etc.), and whenever the word is used colloquially, as in *la mar de tonto* 'absolutely stupid', *la mar de gente* '"loads" of people'.

1.3.17 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: *el bombillo* (Sp. *la bombilla*) 'light bulb', *el cerillo* (Sp. *la cerilla*) 'match' (for making fire), *el llamado* (Sp. *la llamada*) 'call', *el protesto* (Sp. *la protesta*) 'protest', *el vuelto* (Sp. *la vuelta*) 'change' (money). *Sartén* 'frying pan'/US 'skillet' is feminine in most of Spain and in Argentina, masculine in Mexico, and variable elsewhere. Students should enquire locally about its gender.

1.4 French nouns that mislead students of Spanish

The gender of nouns in other Latin-based languages generally provides guidance to Spanish genders, but there are important differences. The following French nouns are notorious traps for students of both languages:

affaire (f.) *el affaire* affair*
aigle (m.) *el águila* (f.) eagle
amalgame (m.) *la amalgama* amalgam
anagramme (f.) *el anagrama* anagram
analyse (f.) *el análisis* analysis
apocalypse (f.) *el apocalipsis* apocalypse
apostrophe (f.) *el apóstrofe* apostrophe
armoire (f.) *el armario* closet
asperge (f.) *el espárrago* asparagus
asthme (m.) *el asma* (fem.) asthma
attaque (f.) *el ataque* attack
automobile (f.) *el automóvil* automobile
banque (f.) *el banco* bank (*la banca* = banking system/bank in card-games)
barbecue (m.) *la barbacoa* barbecue
calme (m.) *la calma* calm
cidre (m.) *la sidra* cider
Coca/Pepsi Cola (m.) *la Coca/Pepsi Cola*,
comète (f.) *el cometa* comet (but *la cometa* = 'kite')
courant (m.) *la corriente* current
dent (f.) *el diente* tooth
diabète (m.) *la diabetes* diabetes
diocèse (m.) *la diócesis* diocese
doute (m.) *la duda* doubt
éclipse (f.) *el eclipse* eclipse
emphase (f.) *el énfasis* pomposity of style, also 'emphasis' in Spanish
énigme (f.) *el enigma* enigma
équipe (f.) *el equipo* team
extase (f.) *el éxtasis* ecstasy
fin (f.) *el fin* end
front (m.) *la frente* forehead (but *el frente* = military/weather front)
fruit (m.) *la fruta*, but 'the fruit of their efforts'= *el fruto de sus esfuerzos*
fumée (f.) *el humo* smoke
guide (m.) *la guía* guide book
hamburger (m.) *la hamburguesa*
horloge (f.) *el reloj* clock

idole (f.) el *ídolo* idol
insulte (f) *el insulto* insult
lait (m.) *la leche* milk
lèvre (f.) *el labio* lip
lièvre (m.) *la liebre* hare
limite (f.) *el límite* limit
marge (f.) *la margen* only when it means 'river bank', masc. in all other meanings
massacre (m.) *la masacre* massacre
Méditerranée (f.) *el Mediterráneo*
mensonge (m.) *la mentira* lie
mer (f.) *el mar* sea (but see 1.3.16)
meringue (f.) *el merengue*
méthode (f.) *el método* method
miel (m.) *la miel* honey
minute (f.) *el minuto* minute
moral (m.) *la moral* morale
nez (m.) *la nariz* nose
oasis (f.) *el oasis* oasis
ongle (m.) *la uña* (f.) fingernail/toe-nail
ordre (m.) *la orden*. when it means command or religious order, otherwise masc.
origine (f.) *el origen* origin
panique (f.) *el pánico* panic
paradoxe (m.) *la paradoja* paradox
parenthèse (f.) *el paréntesis* bracket/parenthesis
période (f.) *el período/periodo* period
phoque (m) *la foca* seal (the animal)
planète (f.) *el planeta* planet
préface (f.) *el prefacio* preface
Pyrénées (f.) *el Pirineo* or *los Pirineos* Pyrenees
rat (m.) *la rata* rat
sang (m.) *la sangre* blood
sauna (m.) *la sauna* sauna (m. in parts of Lat. Am.)
seconde (f.) *el segundo* second
sel (m.) *la sal* salt
serpent (m.) *la serpiente* snake
signe, *signal* (m.) *la seña*, *la señal* sign, signal
stratagème (m.) *la estratagema* stratagem
vallée (f.) *el valle* valley
vodka (m.) *la vodka* (or *el vodka*)
zèbre (m.) *la cebra* zebra

*An extra- or non-marital relationship is also *una aventura* (*amorosa*).

(1) Most French words ending in *-eur* are feminine, but their Spanish equivalents ending in *-or* are mostly masculine: *la chaleur/el calor*, *la couleur/el color*, *la douleur/el dolor*, *une erreur/un error*, *la terreur/el terror*, *la vigueur/el vigor*, etc.

1.5 Words differentiated by gender

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

busca (m.) bleeper/pager (f.) search
capital (m.) capital (money) (f.) capital city
cólera (m.) cholera (f.) wrath/anger
coma (m.) coma (f.) comma
cometa (m.) comet (f.) kite (toy)
consonante (m.) rhyming word (f.) consonant
corte (m.) cut (f.) the Court/'Madrid'
cura (m.) priest (f.) cure
delta (m.) river delta (f.) delta (Greek letter)
doblez (usually m.) fold/crease (usually f.) duplicity
editorial (m.) editorial (f.) publishing house
escucha (m.) electronic bug (f.) listening/monitoring
final (m.) end (f.) final (race, in sports)
frente (m.) front (military) (f.) forehead
génesis (f) origin/genesis (m.) Genesis, the book of the Bible
guardia (m.) policeman (f.) guard (see 1.2.4 note 2)
mañana (m.) tomorrow/morrow (f.) morning
margen (m.) margin (f.) riverbank
moral (m.) mulberry tree (f.) morals/morale
orden (m.) order (opposite of disorder) (f.) command or religious order
ordenanza (m.) messenger/orderly (f.) decree/ordinance
parte (m.) official bulletin (f.) part
pendiente (m.) earring (f.) slope
pez (m.) fish (f.) pitch (i.e. tar)
radio (m.) radius/radium/spoke (f.) radio
terminal (see note 2)

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

a good dictionary for other similar phrases. Seco (1998), 60, notes that a phrase like *est**a** nuev**a** arte* 'this new art-form' is not incorrect, and ***los** artes de pesca* 'fishing gear' (of a trawler) is standard usage, although *las artes* is also used: . . . *temiendo que un lobo marino o un delfín se hubiera introducido en las artes* (*El País*, Ur.) '. . . fearing that a seal (Sp. *una foca*) or dolphin had got into the tackle'.

(2) *Terminal* is usually masculine when it means 'electrical terminal', usually feminine when it means 'computer terminal', and normally feminine when it means 'transport terminal'. However, in Chile, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela it is masculine in the latter meaning.

(3) For the gender of *radio* 'radio' see 1.3.4 note 1.

2 Plural of Nouns

The main points discussed in this chapter are

- How to form the plural of nouns (Section 2.1)
- Special features of the plural of nouns (Section 2.2)
- Count and mass nouns in Spanish (Section 2.2.1)
- Number agreement rules (Section 2.3)

2.1 How to form the plural of nouns

2.1.1 Summary of rules

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

Method	Main type of noun	Example	See section
1. Add *–s*	• Nouns ending with an unstressed vowel • Many foreign words ending with a consonant • Nouns ending in *é*, *ó* and some nouns ending in *á*, *ú*	*la casa-las casas* *el chalet-los chalets* *el jersey-los jerséis* *el café-los cafés*, *el capó-los capós*, *el sofá-los sofás*, *el menú-los menús*	**2.1.2**
2. Add *–es*	• Spanish nouns ending with a consonant other than *-s* • Nouns ending with a **stressed** vowel + *s* • Nouns ending in *ú* • Nouns ending in *-í*	*la flor-las flores* *el inglés-los ingleses* *la tos-las toses* *el tabú-los tabúes* *el israelí-los israelíes* or *los israelís*	**2.1.3**
3. No change	• Nouns ending with an **unstressed** vowel + *-s* • Families of people or things • Some foreign nouns whose plural would be difficult to pronounce	*la crisis-las crisis* *el virus-los virus* *los Blanco, los Ford* *el test-los test* (or *tests*) *el kibbutz-los kibbutz*	**2.1.5**

2.1.2 Nouns that make their plural by adding *-s*

(**a**) Nouns ending in an unstressed vowel (very numerous):

el huevo – los huevos egg
la cama – las camas bed
la serie – las series series
la tribu – las tribus tribe

(**b**) Nouns ending in *-é*, and words of one syllable ending in *-e*:

el bebé – los bebés baby
el café – los cafés coffee/café
el pie – los pies foot/feet
el té – los tés tea

(**c**) Nouns of more than one syllable ending with *–ó* (rare):

el dominó – los dominós domino
el buró – los burós roll-top desk

Compare *el no – los noes*, 'no'/'noes', a one-syllable word.

(**d**) Many foreign words ending in a consonant, e.g. *el anorak – los anoraks*. See 2.1.6.

2.1.3 Nouns that make their plural by adding *-es*

When *-es* is added any accent written on the last vowel of the singular disappears: *la revolución – las revoluciones* 'revolution(s)', *el/la rehén – los/las rehenes* 'hostage(s)'. But the accent is retained in the combinations *aí* or *aú* to show that the second vowel is pronounced separately and not like 'y' or 'w': *el país – los países* 'country', *la raíz – las raíces* 'root', *el baúl – los baúles* 'suitcase(s)'.

If *-es* is added to a final *z*, the *z* is written *c*: *la cruz – las cruces* 'cross', *la voz – las voces* 'voice'. The following words make their plural by adding *-es*:

(**a**) Spanish (or Hispanicized) nouns ending in a consonant other than *-s* (numerous!):

el avión – los aviones aeroplane
el bar – los bares bar (i.e. café)
el baúl – los baúles trunk/large suitcase
el color – los colores colour
el dron – los drones drone
la ley – las leyes law
la verdad – las verdades truth
la vez – las veces time (as in 'three times')

(**b**) One-syllable nouns ending in *-s*, and nouns ending in a **stressed** vowel plus *s*:

la tos – las toses cough
el dios – los dioses god
el mes – los meses month
la res – las reses farm animal
el autobús – los autobuses bus
el inglés – los ingleses Englishman
el revés – los reveses setback
el país – los países country

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

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

The following plural forms are found in written styles, but nowadays *-s* alone is added in speech and increasingly in print (but *El País* recommends *-es*). The Academy now accepts forms like *marroquís* 'Moroccans', *pakistanís*, *iranís*, etc. The following are in the formal style:

el bisturí – los bisturíes scalpel
hindú – hindúes (Asian) Indian
pakistaní – pakistaníes Pakistani
el zulú – los zulúes Zulu
el tabú – los tabúes taboo
el jacarandá – los jacarandaes jacaranda tree, now usually *jacarandás*

Exceptions: several frequently heard words always simply add *-s*:

el champú – los champús shampoo
el menú – los menús menu
mamá – mamás mother, mum
papá – papás father/dad
el sofá – los sofás sofa/couch
el tisú – los tisús (paper) tissues

But forms like *champúes*, *menúes* occur in the River Plate area. In Spain a restaurant 'menu' is *la carta* and *menú* means 'set menu'.

(1) The Latin-American words *el ají* 'chilli'/'chilli sauce', and *el maní* 'peanut' (Spain *el cacahuete*) often form the plurals *los ajises*, *los manises* in speech, although the *NGLE* 5.2g disapproves and *ajíes*, *maníes* are used in writing and careful speech.

2.1.4 Nouns ending in *-en*

Words ending in *-en* (but *not -én*) require an accent in the plural to preserve the position of the stress. Since they are constantly spelled wrongly the following forms should be noted:

el carmen – los cármenes villa with a garden (esp. in Granada, Spain)
el crimen – los crímenes crime
el germen – los gérmenes germ
el origen – los orígenes origin
el/la margen – los/las márgenes 'margin' (masc.), 'river bank' (fem.)
la imagen – las imágenes image
la virgen – las vírgenes virgin

(1) This also affects the word *el mitin – los mítines* 'political meeting'/'rally'. An ordinary meeting, e.g. family, business, is *una reunión*. 'A reunion' is *un reencuentro*. See 2.1.11 for *el espécimen* and *el régimen.*

2.1.5 Nouns that do not change in the plural (quite common)

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

el – los análisis analysis
el – los atlas atlas
el – los campus campus
el – los cactus cactus
la – las crisis crisis
el – los croquis sketch
la – las dosis dose
el – los lunes Monday (similarly all weekdays)
el – los mecenas patron of the arts
el – los paréntesis bracket
la – las tesis thesis
el – los virus virus

If the word contains only one vowel the plural ends in *-es*, e.g. *el mes – los meses*; see 2.1.3b.

(b) Words ending in *-x*, e.g. *el/los dúplex* US 'duplex apartment', British 'split-level flat' or 'maisonette', *el/los clínex* or *kleenex* '(paper) tissue', *el/los fax* 'fax' (or *faxes*)

(c) Latin words ending in *-t* and *-um* (but see note 1) and a few other foreign words:

los altos déficit presupuestarios (*El País*, Sp.) 'high budgetary deficits'
el – los CD-ROM the CD-ROM(s)
el – los accésit second prize
el – los láser or *lásers* laser
el – los cuórum quorum

(**d**) Some foreign words whose plurals would be difficult to pronounce, e.g. *los bíceps*, *los fórceps*, *los kibbutz*, *los sketch.* See next section.

(1) In everyday language Latin words ending in *-um* tend to form their plural in *-ums*: *el memorándum-los memorandums* (the accent becomes unnecessary because the plural ends in *-s*), *el referéndum – los referendums*, *el ultimátum – los ultimatums*, *el currículum vitae – los currículums vitae*. **Exception**: *el álbum*, usually *los álbumes* 'album'.

El currículo 'curriculum' has recently spread in Spain, and possibly also elsewhere. Where possible, the *NGLE* 3.3j prefers Hispanicized forms like *currículo*(*s*), *referendo*(*s*), *memorando*(*s*), *foro*(*s*), *solario*(*s*) to forms like *forums*, *solariums*.

The *NGLE* 3.3e recommends that Latin words ending in *-t* should add -s: *déficits*, *hábitats*, *superávits*, and this is common practice nowadays.

(2) In general Spanish speakers do not use Latin plurals like our 'cacti' for 'cactuses', 'fora' for 'forums' or (incorrect) 'referenda' for 'referendums'. The *NGLE* 3.3j rejects forms like *data*, *media*, *memoranda* and prefers *datos*, *medios*, *memorandos*, etc.

2.1.6 Plural of foreign words ending in a consonant

The tendency is to treat them all like English words and simply add *-s* – but see 2.1.5c for Latin words. This often produces words ending in two consonants, which is unnatural in Spanish.

If a word ends in *b*, *c*, *f*, *g*, *k*, *m*, *p*, *t*, *v*, or *w*, or in two or more consonants, it is almost certainly a foreign word and will make its plural in *-s* – the *NGLE* 3.4k now accepts these forms – unless they end 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*. Some common examples:

el anorak – los anoraks anorak
el boicot – los boicots boycott
el bug – los bugs 'bug' in computing
el complot – los complots (political) plot
el chalet – los chalets detached house
el gay – los gais gay (homosexual)
el hit – los hits hit song, film, etc.
el hobby – los hobbys hobby
el iceberg – los icebergs iceberg
el jersey – los jerséis jersey
el módem – los modems modem
el penalty – los penaltis in sports

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

el bar – los bares bar
el/la barman – los/las bármanes barman/barmaid
el dólar – los dólares dollar
el dosier – los dosieres dossier
el dron – los drones drone
el electrón – los electrones electron
el escáner – los escáneres scanner/scanning
el estándar – los estándares standard
el gol – los goles goal (in sport)
el hotel – los hoteles hotel
el suéter – los suéteres sweater

(1) *El sándwich* (sliced bread, unlike *un bocadillo* which is made with a baguette), makes the plural *los sándwiches* in educated usage, but *los sándwich* is common, usually pronounced [sáŋ-wich]. The Academy's recommendation for sandwich, *el emparedado*, never caught on. *El sánduche*, which is more pronounceable, is heard in some Latin-American republics.

(2) Old 'Academy' plurals like *los cócteles* 'cocktail', *los córneres* 'corner' (in soccer), *los fraques* (for *los fracs*) 'dress-coat'/'tails', etc. have become obsolete: *-s* alone is added. However *los filmes* 'films' is not uncommon and is the form recommended by *El País* (the usual word is *la película*), and *los clubes* is more common in writing than *los clubs*; *El País* prefers *clubes*. *Los álbumes* is generally preferred to *los álbums* 'albums'. *Los eslóganes* is preferred by the Academy to *los eslogans* '(publicity) slogan'. The usual plurals of *el pin* 'badge' and *el/la fan* 'fan' (e.g. of a singer, but a sports fan is *un/una hincha*) are *pins* and *fans*; the *NGLE* 3.4h advocates *pines* and *fanes* but this advice is generally ignored ('pin number' is *el número secreto*).

(3) Some writers and editors treat foreign words ending in a consonant like Latin words (see 2.1.5c), so forms like *los módem*, *los láser* are seen. Such zero plural forms are often given to foreign words in spontaneous speech. The *NGLE* 3.4p recommends *los test*, *los trust* as plurals since many Spanish-speakers find *sts* difficult to pronounce.

(4) The *NGLE* 3.7m, says that abbreviations should not be pluralized: *las ONG = organizaciones no gubernamentales*, i.e. NGOs or 'non-governmental organizations', not *las ONGs*; *los DNI Documento*

Nacional de Identidad, not *DNIs*. But *las pymes* (*pequeñas y medianas empresas*) 'small and medium-sized businesses' is treated as an ordinary word.

2.1.7 Proper names

If a proper name refers to members of a family, it usually has no plural form: *los Franco*, *los Mallol*, *los Kennedy*, *los Pérez*; *en casa de los Riba hay una niña que amaré toda la vida* (EP, Mex., dialogue) 'in the Ribas' house there's a girl whom I'll love for the whole of my life'; but exceptions to this rule are seen. A group of individuals who merely happen to have the same name will be pluralized according to the usual rules, although names in *-és* and *-z* are almost always invariable:

Este pueblo está lleno de Morenos, Blancos y Péreces/Pérez	This village is full of Morenos, Blancos and Pérezes
no todos los Juan Pérez del mundo (JD, Ch.)	not all the Juan Pérezes in the world

(1) The same rule applies to objects that form families: los Ford 'Ford cars', los Chevrolet, los Renault. The NGLE 3.6h recommends this rule.

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

2.1.8 Compound nouns consisting of a verb + a plural noun

These do not change in the plural:

el – los abrelatas tin-opener
el – los cumpleaños birthday
el – los guardaespaldas bodyguard
el – los lanzamisiles missile-launcher
el – los limpiabotas shoeshine
el – los portaaviones aircraft carrier
la/las tragaperras gambling machine/slot machine
la – las quitanieves snowplough/US snowplow. Seco (1998) says it is feminine
el – los elevalunas automatic car window-opener

2.1.9 Compound nouns consisting of two nouns

This is a large and growing class of compound nouns. Normally only the first noun is pluralized:

el año luz – los años luz light-year
el arco iris – los arcos iris rainbow
el bebé probeta – los bebés probeta test-tube baby
el carril bus – los carriles bus bus lane
la hora punta – las horas punta rush hour/peak hour (*la hora pico* in many Lat. Am. countries)
el perro policía – los perros policía police dog
el satélite espía – los satélites espía spy satellite
la tienda online – las tiendas online online shop/store. Also *tiendas en línea/la cibertienda*.

But always *el país miembro – los países miembros* 'member country', *la tierra virgen – las tierras vírgenes* 'virgin land'.

(1) Pluralizing the second word makes it into a noun rather than an adjective: *los perros policías* sounds like 'dogs who are policemen', but *perros policía* are dogs who work for the police.

Compare *las ediciones pirata* 'pirate editions' and *los editores piratas* 'pirate publishers', *los niños modelo* 'model children' and *los niños modelos* 'child models'.

La ciencia ficción 'science fiction' is unusual in that the second word is the head noun. It is borrowed from English.

(2) These compounds are very common in phrases like *un módem WAP*, *la red wifi* 'wi-fi network', *una tarjeta SIM* 'SIM card', *una página web* 'web page'; in abbreviated notices, e.g. *camisetas niño* 'children's T-shirts', *zapatos mujer* 'women's shoes'; and in trade descriptions: *champú anticaspa* 'anti-dandruff shampoo', *un cupón descuento* 'discount coupon', etc.

For the plural of adjectives like *extra*, *violeta* see 5.2.3 and 5.2.4.

2.1.10 Other types of compound noun

(**a**) The following compound nouns are invariable in the plural:

el sin casa	*los sin casa/sin techo*	homeless person
el hazmerreír	*los hazmerreír*	laughing-stock
el vivalavirgen	*los vivalavirgen*	fun-lover/laid-back/someone who couldn't give a damn

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

el altavoz – los altavoces loudspeaker (Lat. Am. *el altoparlante*)
la bocacalle – las bocacalles side street
el correveidile – los correveidiles tell-tale
los dimes y diretes gossip
el hidalgo – los hidalgos nobleman (the old plural was *hijosdalgo*)
el pésame – los pésames condolences
el quehacer – los quehaceres task
el rapapolvo – los rapapolvos telling-off/scolding
el sordomudo – los sordomudos deaf-mute
el tentempié – los tentempiés snack
el todoterreno – los todoterrenos four-wheel-drive vehicle
el vaivén – los vaivenes ups-and-downs/swaying motion

2.1.11 Irregular plurals

Only four irregular plurals are in common use.

(**a**) Three common nouns shift their stress in the plural: *el carácter – los caracteres* 'character' (**not** **los carácteres*!), *el espécimen – los especímenes* 'specimen' and *el régimen – los regímenes* 'regime'.

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

2.1.12 Plural of abbreviations

The plural of two-word abbreviations is shown by doubling the letters: *las CC. AA. Comunidades Autónomas* 'Autonomous Regions' in Spain, *las FF. AA. las Fuerzas Armadas* 'Armed Forces', *los EE.UU. Los Estados Unidos* 'USA', *las CC. OO. Las Comisiones Obreras*, one of Spain's trade unions, *los JJ.OO los Juegos Olímpicos* 'The Olympic Games'.

2.2 Some features of Spanish plural nouns

2.2.1 Count nouns and mass nouns in Spanish and English

A count noun refers to things that can be counted: 'an egg' – 'two eggs'. Mass or uncountable nouns are non-countable things: '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 same thing: 'her fear' – 'her fears', 'my love' – 'my loves'. This device is more frequent in Spanish than in English, and translation of the plural may require thought, e.g.:

Hubo varias urgencias	There were several emergencies
Ejercía diversas soberbias (JLB, Arg.)	He practised various kinds of arrogance
. . . conductas que afectan el bolsillo de todos los mexicanos (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	. . . types of behaviour that affect the pockets of all Mexicans

A number of Spanish nouns can be pluralized in this way whereas their English translation cannot, e.g.

la amistad friendship	*las amistades* friends
la atención attention	*las atenciones* acts of kindness
la bondad goodness	*las bondades* good acts
la carne meat/flesh	*las carnes* fleshy parts/types of meat
el consejo advice	*los consejos* pieces of advice
la crueldad cruelty	*las crueldades* cruel acts
la información information	*las informaciones* news items
el mueble item of furniture	*los muebles* items of furniture
el negocio business	*los negocios* business affairs, Lat. Am., stores/shops
el pan bread	*los panes* loaves of bread
el progreso progress	*los progresos* advances
la tostada toast	*las tostadas* slices of toast
la tristeza sadness	*las tristezas* sorrows
el trueno thunder	*los truenos* thunderclaps

(1) Both languages may use counters or quantifiers (words like 'loaf', 'piece') to make uncountable nouns plural: *tres pastillas/barras de jabón* 'three bars of soap', *las briznas de hierba* 'blades of grass', *unos dientes de ajo* 'some cloves of garlic', *las parcelas de terreno* 'plots of land', *trozos/hojas/pedazos de papel* 'pieces/sheets of paper', *las barras de tiza* 'sticks of chalk', *los terrones de azúcar* 'lumps of sugar', *las motas de polvo* 'specks of dust', etc.

(2) There are some subtleties: *a finales de agosto* 'at the end of August', but *al final del pasillo* 'at the end of the corridor'; *a comienzos* or *a comienzo de la década* 'at the beginning of the decade', but only *en el comienzo del libro* 'at the beginning of the book'. The *NGLE* 3.8p mentions the difference between *tener relación con alguien* 'to be connected/associated with someone' and *tener relaciones con alguien*' 'to have a sexual, emotional or diplomatic relationship'. *El deber* usually means 'duty'; *los deberes* means 'homework', though the singular can be used for the latter in parts of Latin America.

2.2.2 Nouns denoting symmetrical objects

As in English, these nouns are usually invariably plural:

los auriculares earphones
las bragas panties
las gafas glasses (Lat. Am. *los anteojos/ los lentes*) *las pinzas* tweezers
los prismáticos binoculars
las tijeras scissors

'A pair of' is *unos/unas* before such nouns.

(1) Colloquially the singular may be used in some regions, as in *¿podría prestarme una tijera?* (EP, Mex., dialogue) 'could you lend me some scissors?'. The more usual form in Spain comes first:

los alicates/el alicate pliers/pincer
el bigote/los bigotes moustache
los calzoncillos/un calzoncillo men's underpants/US shorts
la muralla/las murallas city walls
la nariz/las narices nose (both used)
las pinzas/la pinza peg/pincers/ tweezers/ dart (in sewing)
el pantalón/los pantalones trousers/ US 'pants': sing. and plur. equally common

(2) *Las escaleras* = 'stairs', *la escalera* = '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:

las afueras outskirts
las agujetas pins and needles (in the skin)
los alrededores surroundings
los altos (Lat. Am.) upstairs flat/apartment
los bajos (Lat. Am.) downstairs apartment
los bártulos (colloquial) belongings/'gear'
los bienes goods, provisions
buenas noches good night
buenas tardes good afternoon
buenos días good morning
los celos jealousy
los cimientos foundations
las cosquillas tickling
las dietas expenses/allowances/diets
los espaguetis spaghetti
las exequias funeral arrangements
las ganas urge/desire
(*tener muchas*) *ínfulas* to be conceited
las Navidades or *la Navidad* Christmas
las ojeras bags under the eyes
los prismáticos binoculars
los restos remains
los sesos brains (in cooking)
las tinieblas darkness
las vacaciones holiday/vacation
los víveres provisions/supplies
las zarandajas fiddly things/gossip

(1) *Buen día* is a less common alternative to *buenos días.* Christmas is *la Navidad* or *las Navidades*: *Feliz Navidad* = *Felices Navidades* 'Happy Christmas'. *Buenos días*, *buenas tardes* and *buenas noches* can all be shortened to *buen**a**s . . .* in very informal speech. *Buen día* is common in the Southern Cone and is occasionally heard elsewhere. It is uncommon but sometimes heard in Spain.

2.2.4 Singular for objects of which a person has only one

The English sentence 'they hurt 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:

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

(1) This rule is optional when the object possessed is not part of the body: *quítense el sombrero/los sombreros* 'take off your hats', *podéis dejar la chaqueta/las chaquetas aquí* 'you can leave your jackets here'.

(2) The rule with parts of the body is often ignored in Latin-American speech: *nos hemos mojado las cabezas* (Bol., quoted Kany, 26) 'we've wet our heads', *lo hacían para que no les viéramos las caras* (LS, Mex., dialogue) 'they were doing it so we wouldn't see their faces'. The plural can sometimes remove ambiguity, as in *los extranjeros felicitaban al maquinista por su gran pericia para lograr el descarrilamiento en el lugar preciso donde sus vidas corrieran peligro* (*La Época*, Ch.) 'the foreigners congratulated the train-driver for his great skill in managing to cause a derailment exactly at the spot where their lives would be at risk', where the singular *su vida* might mean the train-driver's life.

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 or faintly weary tone:

También había mucha estudiante con vaqueros y camisetas (JM, Sp.)	There were also a lot of girl students in jeans and T-shirts
A mí me parecía maravilloso ver tanto soldado (NC, Mex.)	It seemed wonderful to me to see so many soldiers
¿Cuál era el móvil de tanto ataque? (MS, Mex., dialogue)	What was the reason for so many attacks?

The *GDLE*, 1.2.3.5, says that to enter a busy parking lot looking for a space and to say *hay mucho coche* sounds more pessimistic than *hay muchos coches* 'there are lots of cars'.

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 5.6. For the agreement of possessive adjectives, see 9.3.1–2. For agreement with *cuyo* see 39.7. For tense agreement see 17.8 and 20.8.

2.3.1 Number agreement with collective nouns

(**a**) Adjectives that modify a collective noun (a noun referring to a group of persons or things) are singular and the verb is singular when it immediately follows the noun. In other words, Spanish always says *la policía británica busca* 'the British police "is" seeking', *la gente dice* 'people "says"' . . ., not *'buscan'*, *'dicen'*. British English tends to use the plural after collective nouns:

El gobierno considera . . .	The government consider(s) . . .
La tripulación está a su disposición	The crew are/is at your disposal
El resto de mis bienes es ya vuestro (AG, Sp.)	The rest of my goods is yours now

La mayoría de las personas se quedó boquiabierta cuando lo vio entrar (MS, Mex.)	Most people were gaping when they saw him come in

(**b**) When a 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 airad**os*** 'a group of angry neighbours', *una mayoría de españoles cree**n** que* . . . 'a majority of Spaniards think that . . .', *un mínimo de 13 presos había**n** sido asistidos de heridas* (*El País*, Sp.) 'a minimum of 13 prisoners had been treated for injuries', *la mayoría de las personas que se manifestaron son albañiles* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'the majority of persons who demonstrated are builders'.

But singular agreement is possible: *el resto de los presentes soportaba con estoicismo la elevada temperatura* (LS, Ch.) 'the rest of those present were bearing the high temperature stoically'. The question of agreement in such cases is controversial. Seco (1998), 126, recommends the plural, but *El País* recommends the singular wherever possible. Seco's is the best advice since it avoids nonsense like **un grupo de mujeres rubio* *'a blond group of women' for *un grupo de mujeres rubias* 'a group of blond women'.

(1) When collective nouns are separated from the verb by intervening words, plural agreement is much more common: *cuando la policía llegó al apartamento, se encontr**aron** con la cómica, aunque desagradable escena* . . . (*La Vanguardia*, Sp., quoted *GDLE* 1.4.4) 'when the police reached the apartment they were met with the comical but disagreeable spectacle . . .'

Native speakers 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'.

(2) For constructions like *la mayoría **son** españoles, el comité **son** unos mentirosos*, see 2.3.3.

2.3.2 Plural noun after *tipo de*, etc.

After *tipo de* and similar phrases (e.g. *clase de*, *género de* . . .), countable nouns are usually made plural:

*¿Por qué hacen los hombres este tipo de cosa**s**?* (CRG, Sp.)	Why do men do this kind of thing?
Ese tipo de relaciones son siempre difíciles (MS, Mex., dialogue)	That kind of relationship is always difficult

2.3.3 *Esto son lentejas, todo son problemas, el jefe eres tú*, etc.

When *ser* and a few other verbs like *volverse* have a singular subject and a plural noun for their predicate, as in 'everything **is** problems', they agree in number with the predicate: *todo **son** problemas*, *eso **son** malas noticias* 'that's bad news'. This most often occurs after neuter pronouns like *lo que* . . . 'what . . .', *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*:

El escrito eran nuestras condiciones	The document was our conditions
Primero todo fueron bromas (EP, Mex.)	At first it was all jokes
—¿Cuánto le debo? —Son cien euros	'How much do I owe you?' 'That's 100 euros'
Lo demás fueron un par de detalles burocráticos (ABE, Pe.)	The rest was a couple of bureaucratic details
Su morada más común son las ruinas (JLB, Arg.)	Their most usual dwelling-place is ruins
Lo que llega son series de números (MC, Mex., dialogue)	What arrives is series of numbers

(1) This rule is not always applied: *lo único que no falta es cigarrillos* (MVLl, Pe., for *son cigarrillos*) 'the only thing that isn't lacking is cigarettes', *lo primero que vi fue policías* (ABE, Pe.) 'the first thing I saw was policemen', *lo que mejor se ve es las casas de enfrente* (MP, Arg., dialogue) 'what you can see best is the houses opposite'.

(2) For the rule to be applied, the predicate must really refer to a collection of different things. In the following example Mario is really only one complex person: *Mario es en realidad muchas personas diferentes* 'Mario is really a lot of different people'.

(3) The same – or a similar – rule also applies to other persons of the verb: *la persona más importante* ***eres*** *tú* 'the most important person is you' (not **es tú*), *el que manda soy yo* (not **es yo*) 'I'm the one who gives the orders', *la mayoría somos cubanos* 'most of us are Cubans', *los responsables sois vosotros* (Spain only, Lat. Am. . . . *son ustedes*) 'you're the responsible ones'.

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 form, or are felt to form, a single concept. Compare *su padre y su madre estaba**n** preocupados* 'his father and mother were worried' (different people) and *Ángela era* ***su*** *mujer y secretaria* 'Angela was his wife and secretary' (one person, so obviously not *sus*).

When several things can optionally be viewed as one, either singular or plural agreement is in fact usually possible:

*El derrumbe del socialismo y la desaparición de la URSS caus**ó** el mayor daño* (FC, Cu., or *causaron*)	The collapse of socialism and the disappearance of the Soviet Union caused the greatest damage

(**b**) With *o* 'or', agreement is optional if the verb comes first, but the singular stresses the idea of 'one or the other' more than the plural: *viene*(*n*) *Mario o Antonia* 'either Mario or Antonia is coming', but *Mario o Antonia vendrán* 'Mario or Antonia are coming'.

(**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 . . .'.

3 The definite article

The main points discussed in this chapter are

- Forms of the definite article (*el/la/los/las*) (Section 3.1)
- The use of *el/un* before certain feminine nouns (Section 3.1.2)
- Uses and omission of the definite article (Section 3.2)

Articles are words meaning 'the' ('definite article') or 'a'/'an' ('indefinite article'). Both English and Spanish have articles, but they are not always used in the same way.

This chapter discusses the forms and uses of the definite article (*el/la/los/las*). The indefinite article, *un/una/unos/unas*, is discussed in Chapter 4.

For the use of the definite article to replace a possessive adjective, e.g. *María se ha roto* ***la*** (not '*su*') *muñeca* 'María's broken her wrist', *me dejé la cartera en casa* 'I left my wallet at home', see 9.3.4. For the definite article in phrases like 'the most interesting book' see 6.3. For the 'neuter article' *lo* see 8.2.

3.1 Forms of the definite article

3.1.1 Masculine and feminine definite articles

	Masculine	Feminine
Singular	***el***	***la*** (***el*** before feminine nouns beginning with a stressed *a* sound. See 3.1.2)
Plural	***los***	***las***

(1) *La* is not shortened to *l'* in modern Spanish: compare *la artista* 'woman artist' with Italian *l'artista*, French *l'artiste*. Nor is the *a* of *la* dropped in pronunciation before words beginning with a vowel other than *a*: *la emisora* 'radio station' is pronounced [lae-mi-só-ɾa], not [le-mi-só-ɾa]. The *a* and *e* are run together to form one syllable in a way that English-speakers find difficult to imitate. Compare *la amiga* [la-mí-ɣa] 'female friend', *la avioneta* [la-βyo-né-ta] 'light aeroplane'.

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

Important: on both continents and in all styles *el* and *un* must be used immediately before singular feminine nouns beginning with stressed *a-* or *ha-*: *el agua* 'water', *el/un haya* 'beech-tree', *el aforo del aula* 'the capacity of the lecture room', etc. This does not affect their gender, which remains feminine. Some common examples:

el/un abra mountain pass (Lat. Am. Sp. *el puerto*)
el África moderna modern Africa
el/un águila eagle
el/un alba dawn
el/un alma soul
el/un alza rise/increase
el/un ancla anchor
el/un área area
el/un arma weapon
el/un arpa harp
el Asia de hoy Asia today
el/un asma asthma
el/un ave large bird
el/un habla speech-form
el/un hacha axe/US ax
el/un hada fairy
el/un hambre hunger
el hampa the criminal underworld

The plural is always with *las/unas*: *las águilas* 'eagles', *las hachas* 'axes' and adjectives are feminine in form: *un aula oscur**a*** 'a dark lecture hall'. The feminine article must also be used if any word comes between the definite article and the noun: *un**a** peligros**a** arma* 'a dangerous weapon', ***la** mism**a** agua* 'the same water'. Compare the following words which do not begin with a stressed *a*:

la/una amnistía amnesty	*la arena* sand	*la/una hacienda* ranch
la/una apertura opening	*la/una arroba* at-sign: @; also an old measure of weight = 11.502 kg	*la/una hamburguesa* hamburger

Exceptions: *la/una a* 'letter a', *la/una app* 'app' (in computing), *la/una hache*, 'letter h', *la/una aya* children's governess, *La Haya* 'the Hague', *la/una árabe* 'Arab woman', *la/una ácrata* 'anarchist woman', *la/una árbitra* 'female referee' (approved by the Academy); abbreviations – see note 3. The Spanish high-speed train, *el AVE* (*Alta Velocidad Española*) is masculine because of underlying *el tren*.

(1) One sees and hears mistakes like **otro aula* 'another lecture room' for *otra aula* or **a raíz del último alza del petróleo* (*Abc*, Sp., quoted Seco 1998, 176, properly *la última alza*) '**. . .** following the latest rise in oil prices'. ?*Tengo un hambre bárbaro* 'I'm starving hungry' or ?*tengo mucho hambre* 'I'm very hungry' are heard in relaxed speech on both continents for **. . .** *hambre bárbara*, **. . .** *mucha hambre*. The masculine forms are banned from careful language.

(2) Important: use of the masculine article occurs only before nouns, not before adjectives beginning with stressed *a-* or *ha*:

*un**a** amplia estancia* (FU, Sp.)	wide room
una alta mujer (JLB, Arg.)	a tall woman
¿Vas a comprar un móvil? La amplia gama de modelos complica la decisión (*El País*, Sp.)	Are you buying a mobile/cell phone? The wide range of models makes deciding more difficult

(3) The rule does not apply to abbreviations. *La ACA = la Agencia Catalana de Agua* 'Catalan Water Authority'.

(4) *El* and *un* are often used before feminine compound nouns whose first element would have begun with a stressed *a* had it stood alone: *aguamarina* 'aquamarine', *aguanieve* 'sleet', *avemaría* 'Ave Maria'. However, the Academy recommends *la* (*NGLE* 14.2u).

(5) The use of *un* in writing before these nouns is a recent development although it has a long history in spoken Spanish. The Academy's Dictionary adopted it only after 1970, so forms like *una alma* for *un alma* 'a soul' are therefore still sometimes found.

(6) for *alguna* or *algún* 'some' before nouns beginning with stressed *a-* or *ha-* see 10.4.1 note 2. For *ninguna* 'no' see 27.5.5. For the colloquial use of *este* 'this', *ese* and *aquel* 'that' before these nouns, see 7.1 note 3.

(7) *La* is also used before *Ángela*, *Ana* and other women's names beginning with stressed *A*, but use of the article before names is unusual in most regions. See 3.2.21.

(8) Note *la/una haz* or *el/un haz*, feminine, 'surface'/'face', e.g. *por el haz y por el envés* 'on the surface and on the reverse side', *el haz* being most common in Spain. But *el haz*, masculine = 'bundle' or 'beam of light'.

3.1.3 *Del* and *al*

De plus *el* is shortened to *del* 'of the' – *del libro* 'of the book' – and *a* plus *el* is shortened to *al* 'to the': '*al libro*' to the book'. *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 definite article is part of a proper name:

la primera página de El Comercio	page one of *El Comercio*
Viajaron a El Cairo	They travelled to Cairo
en el último número de El Vocero Cristiano (J JA, Mex.)	in the latest number of *The Christian Spokesman*

3.2 Uses and omission of the definite article

3.2.1 General remarks on the use of the definite article

The use of the articles is notoriously difficult to explain: why *does* one say *en* ***la*** *práctica* 'in practice' but – usually – *en teoría* 'in theory'? Use of the definite articles also varies slightly from region to region, so the rules given here must be supplemented by careful study of good writing and educated speech. What follows should make it clear to readers who know French that, despite many similarities, the Spanish definite article is less used than its French counterpart, and apparently less now than before about 1950.

3.2.2 The French and Spanish definite articles

The following summary of the main differences and similarities may be useful.

French	Spanish
Used with unqualified names of countries, regions: *l'Espagne est un beau pays, vive la France!, la Normandie*, etc.	Not used, with exceptions shown at 3.2.17. *España es un hermoso país, ¡viva Francia!*,
Used when addressing people: *salut les gars!, oui, monsieur le Président*	Not used: *¡hola muchachos!, sí, señor Presidente*
Not used in sentences like *il viendra mardi*	Used: *vendrá el martes*
Not used in time expressions of the type *il est huit heures*	Used: *son las ocho*
Used with generic nouns: *le vin est mauvais pour le foie* 'wine is bad for the liver'	Very similar, but not identical (see 3.2.6): *el vino es malo para el hígado*
Replaces possessives with parts of body: *il ferme les yeux, il lui caresse les cheveux, il a les yeux bleus*, etc.	Similar, but also with clothing and personal possessions: *cierra los ojos* 'he shuts his eyes', *le acaricia el pelo* '(s)he strokes his/her hair', *he perdido la agenda* 'I've lost my diary', *te he aparcado el coche* 'I've parked your car'. See 9.3.4
Double article in superlatives when adjective follows noun: *le livre le plus intéressant*	Only one article, *el libro más interesante*. See 6.3
Used with superlative adverbs: *c'est lui qui chante le mieux*	Not used: *él es quien mejor canta*; see 6.4
Used in phrases like *cinq euros le kilo*	Same: *cinco euros el kilo*
De used before partitive nouns (i.e. to ex press 'some'): *il boit de l'eau, il y avait de la neige, des monnaies*	No article or preposition: *bebe agua, había nieve,* or *unos* used: *unas monedas*

3.2.3 A useful generalization about the Spanish definite article

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

la caída del gobierno	the fall of the government
El gato se ha comido las salchichas	The cat's eaten the sausages

Exceptions:
(**a**) Ordinal numbers with kings, popes, etc.: *Fernando VII* (*Fernando séptimo*) 'Ferdinand *the* Seventh', *Carlos III* (*Carlos tercero*) 'Charles the Third', *Juan XXIII* (*Juan veintitrés*).

(**b**) Some set phrases in Spanish have no definite article whereas in English they usually do.

a corto/largo plazo in the short/long run
a gusto de to the liking of
a título de in the capacity of: *a título de información* 'to whom it may concern'
a voluntad de at the discretion of
cuesta abajo down (the) hill
cuesta arriba up (the) hill
de plantilla on the payroll/staff
en alta mar on the high seas
en manos de at/in the hands of
en nombre de in the name of
hacia oriente, etc. towards the east (but *hacia el este*, *sur,* etc.)

Note also *a fuerza de* 'by dint/means of', and *a la fuerza/por fuerza* 'by force'.

(**c**) The word *Internet* is usually used with no article: *bajar/descargar un fichero de Internet* 'to download a file from the Internet'.

3.2.4 Definite article with more than one noun

Two or more nouns should have their own definite article if they refer to different things (but see 3.2.7 for an exception). In this respect, Spanish differs from English which allows phrases like 'the sun and moon', 'a dog and cat', 'those men and women'. Spanish says *el sol y **la** luna*, *un perro y un gato*, *esos hombres y esas mujeres*. ?*Un gato y perro* suggests a cross between a cat and a dog, and **mi hermano y hermana* 'my brother and sister' is not good Spanish:

el padre y la madre	the father and mother
entre el hotel y la playa	between the hotel and beach
El desorden callejero y las piedras son contrarios a la democracia (*La Época*, Ch.)	Street disorders and stones are contrary to democracy

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

el misterio o enigma del origen . . . (OP, Mex.)	the mystery or enigma of the origin
los laboratorios, equipos, bibliotecas, aulas, sistemas audiovisuales indispensables para cumplir con su trabajo. (MVLl, Pe.),	. . . the laboratories, equipment, libraries, lecture rooms, audio-visual systems indispensable for them to do their work

(1) Nouns may represent similar things in one context and not in another. One says *voy a comprar 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'. Here books and magazines are seen as varieties of one thing, i.e. 'publications'.

(2) Pairs of humans or animals must have separate articles: *el abuelo y la abuela* 'grandfather and grandmother', *el padre y el hijo* 'father and son', *el/un toro y la/una vaca* 'the/a bull and (the/a) cow'; **never** **el abuelo y abuela*, **el padre e hijo*, **el/un toro y vaca.*

(3) Constructions like **los y las alumn**o**s* or **las y los alumn**o**s* for *los alumnos y las alumnas* '(the male and female students)' are not Spanish, but they are more acceptable with nouns that are not marked by their ending for gender, as in *los y las estudiant**es*** (*el/la estudiante* = 'student'), *los y las clientes 'customers'/'clients'*.

3.2.5 Omission of articles in proverbs

Articles, definite and indefinite, are often dropped in proverbs and in remarks that are meant to sound like proverbial wisdom:

Gato escaldado del agua fría huye	A scalded cat runs from cold water
Oveja que bala, bocado que pierde	A bleating sheep misses a nibble (i.e. you miss out if you talk too much)
Turista que se enoja, no regresa (LS, Mex., dialogue. *Enojarse* = *enfadarse* in Spain)	An angry tourist doesn't come back

3.2.6 Definite article with generic nouns

With the exceptions noted at 3.2.10, the definite article is used before nouns that refer to something in general ('generic' nouns). In this respect, Spanish differs completely from English. These nouns are typically:

(**a**) Abstract nouns referring to a concept in general:

la democracia	democracy
el catolicismo español/la sociedad cubana	Spanish Catholicism/Cuban society
Mi relato será fiel a la realidad (JLB, Arg.)	My story will be true to reality
El debate sobre la cultura, los derechos, y la autonomía indígena (*La Reforma*, Mex.)	The debate about culture, rights and Native-American autonomy

Sentences like **reforma electoral es la única solución* 'electoral reform is the only solution', are a common mistake of English-speakers and must be rewritten ***la** *reforma electoral es* **. . .**

(**b**) Substances in general:

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

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

Los belgas beben mucha cerveza	Belgians (in general) drink a lot of beer
Los automovilistas debían contentarse con escuchar la radio (*La Nación*, Arg., refers to all the the drivers involved in the jam)	Car-drivers had to make do with listening to their radios
El tigre es un animal peligroso	The tiger is ('tigers are') a dangerous animal
El periodista escribe para el olvido (JLB, Arg., dialogue)	Journalists write for oblivion (i.e. 'to be forgotten')

Sentences like **italianos comen más ajo que noruegos* 'Italians eat more garlic than Norwegians' are not Spanish, though they are seen in Latin-American press headlines. One says *los italianos comen más ajo que los noruegos*.

(1) Colours belong to the class of abstract nouns and require the definite article: *el azul* 'blue', *el negro* 'black', *el amarillo no me gusta* 'I don't like yellow'. A sentence like *¿te gusta el rojo?* is therefore ambiguous: 'do you like the red **one**' or 'do you like (the colour) red?' Illnesses are also treated as abstract nouns: *el sida* 'AIDS', *la diabetes* 'diabetes', *el sarampión* 'measles', *la gripe* (often *la gripa* in Mexico) 'flu'.

(2) These rules apply especially when the noun is the subject of a verb. The definite article must not be omitted in the following sentences (but see 3.2.7 for the omission of the definite article from lists of two or more generic nouns): *no me gusta **la** manzanilla* 'I don't like camomile', ***el** azúcar es malo para los dientes* 'sugar is bad for the teeth', *los portátiles cuestan más* 'laptops cost more'. But when the noun is the object of a verb or is preceded by a preposition, the definite article is sometimes omitted. See 3.2.10 for examples.

(3) Sentences like *me gusta el vino*, *me gustan las cerezas* are ambiguous out of context: 'I like *the* wine/*the* cherries' or 'I like wine/cherries'. 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.

(4) Use of a singular count noun with a generic meaning is more frequent in Spanish than in English, where it may sound old-fashioned: *el español, cuando está de vacaciones, come mucho marisco* 'Spaniards, when they're on holiday, eat a lot of shellfish', rather than 'the Spaniard, when on holiday, eats **. . .**'.

(5) The Academy disapproves of the recent tendency to omit the definite article after *mayoría* 'majority' and *la mayor parte* 'the greater part of', as in *la mayoría/mayor parte de personas* for *la mayoría/mayor parte de las personas* 'the majority/greater part of persons/people'.

3.2.7 Omission of the definite article in lists

When two or more nouns follow one another all the definite articles may be omitted, especially, but not exclusively, in literary style. One must say ***los** hombres se exaltan al escucharlo* '(the) men get worked up listening to him', but one can say *hombres y mujeres se exaltan al escucharlo* (EP, Mex.) 'men and women get excited **. . .**'. Further examples:

el debate entre ciencia y religión	the debate between science and religion
Ingleses y franceses creyeron que la sola exhibición de sus imponentes, naves bastaría para **. . .** (*La Nación*, Arg.)	The English and French thought that merely displaying their imposing ships would be enough to **. . .**
Tanto tripulación como oficialía se habían convertido en sus amigos (SG, Mex.)	Both crew and officers had become his friends

A similar rule exists in literary English: 'but dog and cat soon fell out' is the same as 'but the dog and (the) cat soon fell out'.

3.2.8 Omission of the definite article before partitive nouns (see Glossary)

The definite article is not used before nouns that refer only to part of something or to some members of a set, i.e.:

(**a**) before partitive mass (uncountable) nouns, e.g. substances and abstractions:

Quiero cerveza	I want (some) beer
Eso necesita valor	That needs courage
No hay agua	There isn't any water/There's no water
Su móvil no tiene cobertura	His/her/your mobile/cell phone has no signal

But the difference between generic and partitive mass nouns is not always obvious, as in the sentence *no como carne* 'I don't eat meat', where *carne* apparently refers to meat in general. 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	Don't forget to bring (some) nails
Incluso nos dieron flores	They even gave us (some) flowers
Llevan armas	They're carrying weapons

(1) French and Italian regularly use 'of' 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, although it may occasionally appear before words meaning 'this' or 'that' 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 modified 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 or modified by a following word or phrase. Compare

Estamos hablando de religión	We're talking (about) religion
Está hecho de oro	It's made of gold

and

Estamos hablando de ***la*** *religión de los antiguos persas*	We're talking about the religion of the ancient Persians
Está hecho ***del*** *oro que trajeron de las Indias*	It's made from the gold they brought from the Indies

Important: this rule overrides 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 and have no definite article, and these nouns can only be learned with practice:

Está hecho de oro macizo	It's made of solid gold
Estamos hablando de religión antigua	We're talking about ancient religion
No hablo con traidores de su patria	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 require the definite article – has exceptions. For example, in *yo no como carne* 'I don't eat meat', *carne* is apparently generic since it refers to meat in general. These exceptions – or apparent exceptions – usually occur in the following contexts:

(**a**) After prepositions. Nouns following prepositions are often really partitive: they denote a part or an aspect of the thing they refer to. If this is the case, they take no definite article:

Le gusta salir con ingleses (one or a few at a time, not the whole species)	(S)he likes going out with English people
Ella siempre acaba hablando de sexo (SP, Sp., dialogue)	She always ends up talking about sex
. . . *las polémicas sobre diálogos regionales con la guerrilla* (*El Tiempo*, Col.)	. . . the disputes about regional talks with the guerrilla forces
El Ministerio de Aviación/Agricultura	The Ministry of Aviation/Agriculture

(**b**) After certain verbs, e.g. of consuming, desiring, producing:

Los lagartos comen moscas	Lizards eat flies
Claro que uso jabón	Of course I use soap
Queremos paz	We want peace

Important: 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 definite article is obligatory:

Odio las películas violentas	I hate violent movies
Me encanta el helado de vainilla	I love vanilla ice cream
Hay que combatir el terrorismo	Terrorism must be fought

(**c**) In many adverbial phrases

The definite article is not used in numerous adverbial phrases involving a preposition plus a noun:

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

(1) Omission or retention of the definite article with abstract and mass nouns after a preposition like *de* or *sobre* often depends on the point of view of the speaker. One can say either *publicó tres artículos sobre poesía* '(s)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 avoid using the definite article, although with nouns referring to more abstract concepts the definite article is more likely, as in *una conferencia sobre la libertad* 'a lecture on Freedom'. For further details about omission after the preposition *de*, see 3.2.11.

(2) Spanish usage differs from French with respect to the names of ministers and ministries: *el ministro de agricultura/le ministre de* ***l'****agriculture*, *el Ministerio de Defensa/le Ministère de* ***la*** *Défense*, etc.

3.2.11 The definite article after *de*

Important: when two nouns are joined by *de* to express a new concept, the definite article is not normally used before the second noun. Compare *la rueda* ***del*** *coche* 'the wheel of/from the car' and *una rueda* ***de*** *coche* 'a car wheel', *la carne de la vaca* 'the meat of the cow' and *la carne de vaca* 'beef', *los sombreros de las mujeres* 'the women's hats' and *los sombreros de mujer* 'women's hats'. Further examples:

el dolor de muelas	toothache
la Edad de (*la*) *Piedra*, but usually *la Edad del Hierro*	the Stone Age, the Iron Age
un tren de mercancías	a freight train
la bandeja de entrada	in-box (in email software)
el reconocimiento de voz	voice recognition (computing)
. . . *la tristeza de flor de cementerio que dan los lirios* (MP, Arg.)	. . . the cemetery-flower sadness that irises give off

English often expresses these combinations by a compound noun: compare *la noche de la fiesta* 'the night of the party' and *la noche de fiesta* 'party night'.

(1) Latin-American Spanish, particularly in newspapers, sometimes uses *de* constructions without the definite article that are rejected in Spain, cf. *el problema de orden público es cada día más grave* (*El Tiempo*, Col., Sp. *el problema del orden público*) 'the problem of public order gets more serious every day'.

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

Spanish does not often use the definite article after *haber*: *hay agua* 'there's water', *hubo una tormenta* 'there was a storm', but *ahí está* ***el*** *cartero* 'there's the postman'/'the postman's arrived'. See 34.2.1 note 4.

3.2.13 Omission of the definite articles in titles of books, films, etc.

In titles of books and films, etc., the definite article is often omitted before nouns that are not felt to be unique entities (for the non-use of capital letters in book titles, see 44.3.2d):

Política y estado bajo el régimen de Franco	*Politics and the State under the Franco Regime*
Casa de campo, de José Donoso	*The Country House*, by José Donoso
Vida de don Quijote	*The Life of Don Quixote*

But with unique things or proper names the definite article is retained:

La casa verde, de Mario Vargas Llosa	*The Green House*, by Mario Vargas Llosa
La Iglesia en España hoy y mañana	*The Church in Spain today and tomorrow*

3.2.14 Omission of definite articles in headlines

In Spain the grammar of headlines is fairly normal, but Latin-American headlines often follow the English practice of omitting articles (for the word order of these Latin-American headlines see 42.9.1 note 3):

Gobierno no toca alta burocracia (*La Época*, Mex.)	Government leaves Top Bureaucrats untouched
Urbes italianas prohíben festejos con pirotecnia (*El Mercurio*, Mex. *Urbes* = *ciudades* in Spain)	Italian cities ban celebrations with fireworks
Afirma divorcios producen temblor (*Última Hora*, Dom. Rep.)	'Divorces cause Earthquake' Claim

This kind of language is spreading to Spain. The *NGLE* 15.12f notes examples like *Presunto delincuente hiere a dos policías* (*El País*, Sp.) 'alleged criminal wounds two policemen'.

3.2.15 The definite article with names of unique entities

Use of the definite article with unique entities (things of which there is only one) is more or less the same as in English, e.g. *la Casa Blanca* 'the White House', *el Atlántico* 'the Atlantic', *la Virgen* 'the Virgin', *el Camino de Santiago* 'the Milky Way' (*la Vía Láctea*, lit. 'St James's Way', also the name of the pilgrims' route), *la estratosfera* 'the stratosphere', *el sol* 'the Sun'; but, as in English, no article is used with names of planets: *Mercurio*, *Júpiter*, *Venus*, etc. For the definite article with names of languages and countries, see 3.2.16 and 3.2.17.

(1) Spanish uses the definite article with mountains, volcanoes and with Heaven and Hell: *el Infierno* 'Hell', *el Cielo/el Paraíso* 'Heaven'/'Paradise', *el Everest*, *el Vesubio.*

(2) As in English, the definite article is not used with personal names as opposed to epithets, titles or nicknames: *Dios* 'God', *Cristo* 'Christ' (rarely *el Cristo*), *Jesucristo* 'Jesus Christ', *Satanás* 'Satan', but *el Salvador* 'the Saviour', *la Inmaculada* 'the Blessed Virgin', '*el Che*' '"Che" Guevara'. For the definite article before ordinary personal names see 3.2.21 below.

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*:

en español, *en inglés*	in Spanish, in English
Sé quechua	I know Quechua
Aprendo alemán/Habla griego	I'm learning German/(S)he speaks Greek

But when the verb is modified by an adverb the definite article is often used: *habla correctamente* ***el*** *francés* '(s)he speaks French fluently', *hablaba bien el italiano* (JLB, Arg.).

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

Entiendo (*el*) *inglés*	I understand English
Escribe (*el*) *italiano*	(S)he writes Italian

(**c**) After other prepositions, the definite article is used:

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

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

(**e**) After *dominar* 'master', *chapurrear* 'speak badly', *destrozar* 'murder' and other verbs not discussed above, the definite article is used: *domina perfectamente el portugués* '(s)he's a complete master of Portuguese', *chapurrea el inglés* '(s)he speaks broken English'.

(**f**) If the language is the subject of a verb it requires the definite article: *el francés es difícil* 'French is difficult', *el español es una lengua hermosa* 'Spanish is a beautiful language'.

(**g**) If the language is qualified by a following word or phrase, the definite article is required: *el español de Colombia* 'the Spanish of Colombia', *el inglés que se habla en Tennessee* 'the English spoken in Tennessee'.

3.2.17 Definite article with names of countries

This is problematic since spoken usage varies and is often out of line with modern written styles. Unless the definite article is part of the name (as in *El Salvador*), *El País* orders its journalists to write all countries without the definite article except *la India* and *los Países Bajos* 'the Low Countries', and use of the definite article is in decline, especially in Spain. The rules of everyday spoken language seem to be:

(**a**) Obligatory: *El Salvador* (capital *E* because the *El* is part of the name), *los Países Bajos* 'the Low Countries', *La República Checa* 'Czech Republic', *la República Dominicana*.

(**b**) Optional but frequently seen: *el Camerún* 'Cameroon', *el Reino Unido* 'the United Kingdom' (but the article is nowadays often dropped), *los Estados Unidos*, *la India*, *el Líbano* '(the) Lebanon', *la China*, *el Oriente Medio* 'The Middle East', *el Senegal*, *el Sudán*, *el Yemen*.

(**c**) Optional: (*la*) *Arabia Saudí*, (*la*) *Argentina* (article usual in Argentina), (*el*) *Brasil*, (*el*) *Canadá*, (*el*) *Ecuador*, (*las*) *Filipinas* 'the Philippines', *la Guinea*, (*el*) *Irak*, (*el*) *Irán*, (*el*) *Japón*, (*el*) *Nepal*, (*el*) *Pakistán*, (*el*) *Paraguay*, (*el*) *Perú*, (*el*) *Tíbet*, (*el*) *Uruguay*, (*el*) *Vietnam.* The tendency in Spain is to omit the definite article, but it is often seen in Latin America.

Other countries do not take the definite article: *tres años en Australia/Egipto/Noruega* 'three years in Australia/Egypt/Norway'.

(1) 'The United States' is either *los Estados Unidos*, plural agreement or, more usually, *Estados Unidos*, singular agreement and no article – the only form allowed in *El País* (Sp.). *Gran Bretaña* 'Great Britain' does not take the definite article.

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

(3) All place names require the definite article when they are qualified or restricted by a following adjective, phrase or clause, unless the qualifying word is part of an official name: *la España contemporánea* 'contemporary Spain', *la Suecia que yo conocía* 'the Sweden I knew'; but *en Australia Occidental* 'in Western Australia', *en Irlanda del Norte* 'in Northern Ireland'.

(4) Names of some well-known regions, as opposed to countries, tend to be variable: (*la*) *Europa Central*, *América del Sur*, the definite article being less usual nowadays.

3.2.18 Definite article with provinces, regions, cities and towns

Some place names include the definite article as an inseparable feature:

La Rioja	*La Haya* the Hague	*La Paz*	*Los Ángeles*
El Cairo	*la Mancha*	*la Plata*	
la Habana, less often simply *Habana*	*La Meca* Mecca, or simply *Meca*	*La Coruña* or simply *Coruña*	

Otherwise the definite article is not used, unless 3.2.9 applies, as happens 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:

Vive en la plaza/la calle de la Independencia	(S)he lives in Independence Square/Street
la Embajada de los EE.UU., en la avenida Wilson (*Caretas*, Pe.)	the US Embassy on Wilson Avenue

(1) *La calle de* and similar phrases are often omitted in speech: *vive en Independencia*, **. . .** *en Serrano 29, etc.*

3.2.20 Definite articles with days of the week, months and years

(**a**) The definite article appears with days of the week:

Llegan el martes	They're arriving on Tuesday
cerrado los viernes	closed on Friday(s)
Los domingos las calles están casi vacías (MB, Ur., dialogue)	On Sundays the streets are nearly empty
Odio los lunes	I hate Mondays
El miércoles es cuando habrá menos gente a partir del domingo	Wednesday's the day there'll be fewest people after Sunday/from Sunday on

(**b**) The definite article is not used with the names of months, but it is used with the words *mes* 'month', *año* 'year', *mañana* 'morning', *tarde* 'afternoon/evening', *noche* 'night', and *madrugada* 'dawn', except in phrases like *a fin* (less commonly *a finales*) *de mes* 'at the end of the month', *a principios de año* 'at the beginning of the year':

(**c**) With years preceded by a preposition, the definite article is usually omitted – *en 2018* – although with shortened years the definite article is used: *en el 92 'in '92'*. When the year is the subject of a verb the definite article is usual: *el 2017 fue un año difícil* '2017 was a difficult year'.

(1) The definite article is not used when the day is the predicate of *ser* 'to be', as in *hoy es lunes.* But if *ser* means 'to happen', the definite article appears: *fue el sábado por la tarde* 'it was/happened on Saturday afternoon'.

When the day of the week is preceded by *de* meaning 'of', the definite article is used: *ocurrió en la noche del viernes* 'it happened on Friday night'. Compare *trabajo de lunes a jueves* 'I work **from** Mondays to Thursdays'.

(2) The definite article is also not used in dates: *lunes 18 de octubre de 2021* 'Monday (the) 18th of October 2021'.

3.2.21 Definite article with personal names

The definite article sometimes appears before the surname of very famous women: *la Loren*, *la Callas*, *la Pardo Bazán*, *tengo que estar en Nueva York para el funeral de la Garbo* (TM, Sp., dialogue) 'I have to be in New York for Greta Garbo's funeral'. But it is not used in this way before men's surnames.

Use of the definite article before first names, e.g. *la María*, *la Josefa*, *el Mario*, is considered substandard or regional, 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*, Cu.), *detuvieron a Ramón Pérez "el Duque"* 'they arrested Ramón Perez "the Duke"' (notorious criminals usually have aliases or nicknames).

(1) In the Spanish of Chile and Catalonia use of the definite article before first names is common, even in educated speech, e.g. *el Mario*, *la Dorotea*, but foreign learners should avoid this since it may suggest the person is notorious. Students of Portuguese should also avoid the definite article: ***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 Real Madrid*, all masculine because of underlying *el equipo* 'team'.

3.2.23 Definite article before nouns of family relationship

Abuelo/abuela takes the definite article: *el abuelo no parecía dispuesto a soltarme* (SP, Sp.) 'grandfather didn't seem inclined to let me go', *la abuelita llamó a un sacerdote* (AM, Mex., dialogue) 'grandma called a priest'.

Tío/tía 'uncle/aunt' also takes the definite article: *el tío Enrique casi da un manotazo sobre la mesa* (SP, Sp.) 'uncle Enrique nearly slapped the table with his hand'. But the definite article is not used by everyone when referring to their own relatives: *le di un beso a tía Julia* 'I kissed aunt Julia' (but *a la tía* is common).

Latin-American usage also seems to be uncertain, although it overwhelmingly favours use of the definite article: *La tía Julia y el escribidor* (title of novel by MVLl, Pe.) 'Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter', *la tía Verónica era una niña de ojos profundos y labios delgados* (AM, Mex.) 'Aunt Veronica was a girl with deep eyes and thin lips'. 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'.

(1) The definite article is not normally used with *papá*, *mamá*: *dale un beso a papá* 'give daddy a kiss' (not *al papá*).

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 Trump*, *el doctor Fleming*, *el padre Blanco* 'Father Blanco'. It is also used to refer to a couple: *los señores Barral* 'Mr and Mrs Barral'. But it is not used if the person is directly spoken to: *pase usted*, *señor Sender/señor Presidente/padre Blanco* 'come in Mr Sender/Mr President/Father Blanco'.

The definite article is not 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. Note that these titles are not written with capital letters.

For the military forms of address *mi general* 'General', *mi coronel* 'Colonel' see 9.3.3.

(1) *Don/doña* are sometimes used – but much less than in the past – before the first names, or the first name followed by one or both surnames, of older persons to show respect, and on envelopes (less now than formerly): *señor don Miguel Ramírez*, *doña Josefa*, *don Miguel*. The first name must be included after *don*, so not simply **don Ramírez*.

3.2.25 Definite article in apposition

The definite article is usually omitted in apposition (see Glossary) when the following phrase is non-restrictive – i.e. it explains but does not limit the meaning of the previous phrase:

Madrid, capital de España	Madrid, the capital of Spain
Lázaro Conesal, propietario del hotel (MVM, Sp.)	Lázaro Conesal, the owner of the hotel
Ricardo Balbín, jefe de la Unión Cívica Radical (MSQ, Arg.)	Ricardo Balbín, head of the Radical Civic Union
Amilpa, nuevo jefe de la CTM (JA, Mex.)	Amilpa, the new head of the CTM (Confederation of Mexican Workers)

But it is retained:

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

(**b**) usually if the apposition is qualified by a following word or adjectival 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 definite article:

Vivo en el piso (Lat. Am. *el apartamento/el departamento*) *38* (*piso* = 'ground' in Lat. Am.)	I live in apartment 38
Vive en la calle Serrano, en el 23/en el 23 de la calle Serrano (but *vive en Serrano 23*)	(S)he lives at 23 Serrano Street
una disposición del artículo 277 de la Constitución	a provision of Art. 277 of the Constitution
unas fotos del 93	some photos from 1993
el diez por ciento de los peruanos	ten per cent of Peruvians

For more on this subject see 11.11.

3.2.27 Definite article in phrases denoting place

The following often appear with the definite article in Spanish whereas their English equivalents do not. Brackets show that the article is optional:

en (*la*) *cama* in bed
en (*el*) *Palacio* at the Palace
a/en/de la iglesia to/in/from church
en la televisión on television (*la* optional)
al/en el/del cielo/infierno to/in/from Heaven/Hell
en el espacio in space
debajo de la tierra (but *bajo tierra*) underground
al/en el/del hospital to/in/from hospital
en la cárcel/en la iglesia/ in prison/at church
en el colegio/en el trabajo at school/at work

Many other phrases resemble English, e.g. *sobre cubierta* 'on deck', *en contexto* 'in context', *salir de* (*la*) *prisión* 'to get out of prison', *en/a clase* 'in/to class', *a misa* 'to Mass', *sobre cubierta* (*sobre la cubierta* in Latin America) 'on deck'. *A/en/de casa* 'at/in/from home' are often expressed by *a/en/de la casa* in Latin America and sometimes also in Spain.

(1) Many speakers differentiate *en cama* 'in bed sick' and *en la cama* 'in bed resting', but the distinction is not universal.

3.2.28 Definite article after the verb *jugar*

Jugar takes *a* plus the definite article in Spain: *jugar a la pelota* 'to play ball/with a ball', *jugar al ajedrez/a las cartas/al escondite* 'to play chess/cards/hide-and-seek'. The Academy (DPD, 382) seems to disapprove of Catalans omitting the definite article, but accepts it as valid in many parts of Latin America, cf. *mi padre no juega golf y mi madre no juega bridch* (LO, Cu., dialogue; the usual spelling is *bridge*) 'my father doesn't play golf and my mother doesn't play bridge', *jugar tenis con él era como un consejo de ministros* (GGM, Col., dialogue) 'playing tennis with him was like (being at) a Cabinet Meeting'. But *ya sea fumando una pipa o jugando al ajedrez* . . . (MP, Arg., dialogue) 'either smoking a pipe or playing chess'.

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/ustedes las españolas* 'you Spanish women . . .' It is also used when the pronoun is not present:

Los ingleses siempre ocultáis vuestras emociones	You English always hide your emotions
Las mujeres de los mineros siempre estamos en vilo pensando en los hombres (ALS, Sp., dialogue)	We miners' wives are always on tenterhooks thinking about the men

3.2.30 Colloquial use of *la de*

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

. . . *con la de números de abogados que vienen en la guía* . . .	. . . with all the dozens of lawyers' numbers there are in the phone book . . .
. . . *la de veces que han dicho eso*	. . . the number of times they've said that!
. . . *la de lágrimas que solté* (LS, Ch., dialogue)	. . . the quantity of tears I shed . . .

4 The indefinite article

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- The forms and uses of the indefinite article (Section 4.1)
- Uses of *unos/unas* (Section 4.2)

The Spanish indefinite article, *un/una* corresponds to the English words 'a'/'an'.

4.1 Forms and uses of the indefinite article

4.1.1 Forms of the Spanish indefinite article

	Masculine	Feminine
Singular	***un***	***una***
Plural	***unos***	***unas***

Important: *un* is used before feminine nouns beginning with a stressed *a*, e.g. *un arma* 'a weapon', *un águila* 'an eagle', *un haba* 'a bean'. See 3.1.2.

4.1.2 Use of the indefinite article: general

The Spanish indefinite article is used much like 'a' or 'an' in English, but there are two important differences:

(**a**) it is not used before singular countable nouns in certain contexts described below at 4.1.5ff, e.g. *tengo coche* 'I've got a car', *Mario es ingeniero* 'Mario's an engineer', *lo abrió sin llave* '(s)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/US pants', *son unos genios incomprendidos* 'they're misunderstood geniuses'. See 4.2 for details.

(1) *Un* 'a' must be carefully distinguished from *uno* 'one' when a masculine singular noun or adjective is involved. Compare *un verde* 'a Green' (i.e. environmentalist) and *uno verde* 'a green one'; *un parecido* 'a resemblance', *uno parecido* 'a similar one'. The difference is not made in the feminine or in the plural: *una verde* = 'a female "Green"/environmentalist' or 'a green one'.

4.1.3 The indefinite article in French and Spanish

The French and Spanish indefinite articles compared

French	Spanish
The plural indefinite article is *des*, cf. *des gants, ce sont des clowns, je lui ai donné des roses*	The plural is *unos/unas*: *unos guantes, son unos payasos*, but omitted in many cases: *le di* (*unas*) *rosas*. See 3.2.8, 4.2.2

French	Spanish
De used in the negative: *elle ne porte pas de casque*, *je n'ai pas de crayon*	No article: *no lleva casco*, *no tengo lápiz*
Not used after 'to be' before professions: *je suis professeur*, but used after other verbs, e.g. *il a une femme*	Same: *soy profesor*, and omitted in many other cases, e.g. *tiene esposa*. See 4.16ff.
Usually required before each noun: *un homme et* ***une*** *femme*	Same: see next section

4.1.4 Indefinite article before more than one noun

When more than one noun occurs in a sequence, the indefinite article is necessary before each noun. English often omits the second article: *un hombre y* ***una*** *mujer* 'a man and (a) woman' (**un hombre y mujer* is a cross between a man and a woman), *compré una máquina de escribir y una papelera para mi despacho* 'I bought a typewriter and wastepaper basket for my office'.

But omission occurs when the nouns refer to the same thing or to different aspects of the same thing:

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

4.1.5 Omission before singular nouns: general

Un/una is often omitted before singular count nouns. This happens whenever the generic or universal features of the noun are being emphasized. Compare *Pepe tiene coche* 'Pepe's got a car' (like many people) and *Pepe tiene* ***un*** *coche francés* 'Pepe's got a French car'. Section 4.1.7 covers some of the cases in which this type of omission occurs.

4.1.6 Indefinite article not used before professions, occupations, social status, sex

Important: *un/una* is not used before nouns which describe profession, occupation, social status, and it is often omitted before nouns denoting sex. In these phrases, the noun can be thought of as a sort of adjective that simply indicates a general type:

Soy piloto/Son buzos	I'm a pilot/They're divers
Es soltero/Es casada (compare *está casada* 'she's married'; see 33.4.1a)	He's a bachelor/She's a married woman
Se hizo detective	(S)he became a detective
. . . y aunque Alejandra era mujer (ES, Arg.) . . .	. . . and although Alejandra was a woman

(1) Nouns denoting personal qualities rather than membership of a profession or other group require the indefinite article: *es carnicero* 'he's a butcher (by trade)', *es un carnicero* 'he's a butcher (i.e. murderous)'; *es Supermán* 'he is Superman', *es un supermán* 'he's a superman'; *el sargento se decía*: *"No es un ladrón. Es un loco"* (MVLl, Pe.) 'the sergeant said to himself "he's not a thief. He's a madman."'

(2) If a noun of this type is qualified it usually becomes specific (non-generic) and therefore requires the indefinite article. Compare *es actor* 'he's an actor' and *es un actor que nunca encuentra trabajo* 'he's an actor who never finds work'; *me han dicho que usted es un hombre que se ha quedado*

solo (ABE, Pe., dialogue) 'they tell me that you are a man who has ended up alone'. But the resulting noun phrase may still be a recognized profession or generic type, so no definite article will be used: *soy profesor de español*. See 4.1.9 for discussion.

(3) The definite article is used if it means 'one of . . .': —*¿Quién es ese/ése que ha saludado? —Es un profesor/es uno de los profesores* '"Who was that who said hello?" "He's one of the teachers"'.

4.1.7 Omission of the indefinite article with *ser* and nouns not included in 4.1.6

Omission of the indefinite article after *ser* is frequent (**a**) in certain common phrases, e.g. *hoy es fiesta*; (**b**) in literary styles: 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 European Spanish than in Latin-American. In the following phrases omission seems to be optional, and it produces a slightly more literary or emphatic tone:

Es (*una*) *coincidencia*	It's a coincidence
Es (*una*) *cuestión de dinero*	It's a question of money
Es (*una*) *víctima de las circunstancias*	(S)he's a victim of circumstances

But the indefinite article is retained in many common phrases like *es una lata* (colloquial) 'it's a nuisance', *es una pena/lástima* 'it's a pity', *es un problema* 'it's a problem', *es un desastre* 'it/(s)he's a disaster', *ha sido un éxito* 'it was a success'. Omission may occur after a negative verb even though it is not usual after the positive verb:

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

In the following three cases, omission produces a literary or formal effect:

La codorniz es # ave tiernísima (MD, Sp.),	The quail is an extremely tender bird (to eat)
Es # mar de veras (MVLl Pe., dialogue)	It's (a) real sea
¡Esta/ésta es # cuestión que a ustedes no les importa! (JI, Mex., dialogue)	This is an affair that has nothing to do with you!

In all the above examples the appropriate gender of *un* or *una* could have been used at the points marked with #, but the original texts did not use the article.

(1) If the following noun is not generic but merely implies the possession of certain qualities *un/una* must be used: *el hombre es **un** lobo para el hombre* 'man is a wolf to man' (but not a member of the wolf species), *Mercedes es un terremoto* 'Mercedes is an earthquake' (i.e. a hell-raiser), *está hecho una foca* 'he's got really fat' (*la foca* = 'seal', the animal).

(2) Omission of the indefinite article before a qualified noun tends to produce an archaic or literary effect, or it may make the sentence sound like stage instructions as in *entra una señora con sombrero verde con plumas de avestruz* 'a lady with a green hat with ostrich feathers comes in', where ***un** sombrero verde* would nowadays be much more normal. Where Unamuno wrote, in the early twentieth century, *era un viejecillo . . . con levitón de largos bolsillos* 'he was a little old man in a large frock-coat with deep pockets', a modern writer might prefer *un levitón*.

(3) In formal 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 . . .'.

4.1.8 Omission of *un/una* after other verbs

Spanish does not use *un/una* after a number of verbs such as *tener* 'to have', *comprar* 'to buy', *sacar* 'to take/draw out' (with cinema tickets, etc. 'to buy' or 'to book'), *buscar* 'to look for', *llevar* 'to wear', *haber* 'there is/are', when their direct object is a noun referring to things of which one would normally have or carry only one: umbrella, pen, nanny, valet, cook, hat, etc. Omission is normal when the object is something typical or expected. As the *NGLE* 15.13e points out, one would say *María tiene perro* 'María has a dog', but *María tiene* ***una*** *tortuga* 'María has a tortoise'.

Manuel tiene pareja	Pepe's got a partner (female or male)
Mi ordenador/computadora tiene ratón óptico	My computer has an optical mouse
Hay mercado/subasta	There's a market/auction
Vamos a buscarle novia	Let's look for a girlfriend for him
Siempre lleva anillo	(S)he always wears a ring
Barcelona tiene puerto y parque y tranvía y metro y autobús y cine (LG, Sp.)	Barcelona has a port, park, tramway, metro, buses and cinema(s)
Hubo quien se ofendió y sacó pistola (MVLl, Pe.)	One person took offence and pulled a gun
Ya he sacado entrada	I've already got a ticket*

*For the various Spanish equivalents of 'ticket', see 44.1.5 note 1.

(1) *Un/una* is usual if the object has special characteristics: *llevaba* (*una*) *falda* ***blanca*** 'she was wearing a white skirt', *tenía . . . una carita de chico pecoso . . .* (FU, Sp.) 'she had a cute face like a freckled boy's'. But the indefinite article does not always exclude the possibility of a generic meaning. The *NGLE* 15.9e points out that *siempre escribe sus novelas con un bolígrafo* '(s)he always writes his/her novels with a ball-point pen' either means 'with a certain ball-point pen' or 'with any ball-point pen'; . . . *con bolígrafo* limits the meaning to 'any ball-point pen'. Note also *tengo móvil desde hace años* 'I've had a mobile phone/cell phone (one or more) for years', where *un móvil* could imply one specific phone.

(2) Use of *un/una* with unqualified nouns may hint at some suppressed comment: *tiene un coche/una casa . . .* 'you should see his car/house . . .', *tiene unos ojos . . .* 'you should see his/her eyes . . .'. This may sound admiring or insinuating when applied to people, e.g. *marido* 'husband', *novio* 'boyfriend', *novia* 'girlfriend', e.g. *tiene una mujer . . .* 'he's got a wife (and is she . . .)'.

(3) If it would be normal to have more than one of the things denoted, or if the idea of 'one' is relevant, the indefinite article must be used: *tiene mujer y* ***un*** *hijo* (EP, Mex., dialogue) 'he's got a wife and one child', *¿tienes un dólar?* (obviously not **¿tienes dólar?*) 'do you have a dollar?', *tiene un novio en Burgos y otro en Huelva* '(s)he's got one boyfriend in Burgos and another in Huelva'.

4.1.9 Retention of indefinite article before qualified nouns

When nouns are modified by a clause, phrase or adjective, they become specific and the indefinite article may be obligatory (brackets indicate where it is optional): *tengo padre* 'I've got a father' but *tengo un padre que es inaguantable* 'I've got an unbearable father', *era* (*un*) *hombre de costumbres cuidadosas* (AM, Mex.) 'he was a man of prudent customs', *han organizado unas manifestaciones pacíficas* 'they've organized peaceful demonstrations'. But if the resulting noun phrase is still generic, the indefinite article may still be omitted: *tú eres* (*un*) *hombre respetable* 'you're a respectable man', *es pastor protestante* 'he's a Protestant minister', *el doctor Urdino es hombre serio, además de buen gerente* (*El Tiempo*, Col.) 'Doctor Urdino is a serious man as well as a good manager'.

(1) This rule also applies in the plural: *es un ejemplo/son unos ejemplos que hemos encontrado en tu novela* 'it's an example/they're examples we found in your novel', *en seguida me llené de unos celos juveniles hacia él* (FU, Sp.) 'I was immediately filled with juvenile jealousy towards him', *nos convidó unas galletas de agua con queso fresco* (MVLl, Pe., in Spain *convidó a unas . . .*) 'he offered us some water biscuits/US crackers with fresh cheese'.

4.1.10 Omission of indefinite article in apposition

The indefinite article is not normally used in apposition (see Glossary), at least in literary language:

El Español de hoy, lengua en ebullición	*Spanish Today, a Language in Ferment* (book title)
Estuvimos quince días en Acapulco, lugar que nunca olvidaré	We spent two weeks in Acapulco, a place I'll never forget
Luego fue secuestrado Jorge Money, periodista del diario La Opinión (MSQ, Arg.)	They then kidnapped JM, a journalist from the daily newspaper *La Opinión*
Buenos Aires, ciudad que no me atrae (JLB, Arg., dialogue)	Buenos Aires, a city that doesn't attract me
Ahora, a buscar un digno sustituto de Pedro, tarea nada fácil (JJA, Mex., dialogue)	Now let's start looking for a worthy substitute for Pedro; not an easy task

(1) But in informal language, or if the noun in apposition is qualified by an adjective or clause, the article may be retained: *recurrió a Videla, un militar liberal y antiperonista* (MSQ, Arg.) 'he sought the aid of Videla, a liberal and anti-Peronist member of the military'.

4.1.11 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/Juan es un cobarde	John is cowardly/John is a coward
Papá es (*un*) *fascista*	Father is a fascist
Soy extranjero/un extranjero	I'm foreign/I'm a foreigner

(1) Use of the indefinite article often implies a stronger value judgement. *Eres cutre* (Sp., colloquial = *tacaño*, *avaro*) = 'you're mean', *eres un cutre* = 'you're a mean person'; *eres tonto* 'you're silly', *eres un tonto* 'you're a fool/idiot'; *es vaga* (Sp., colloquial = *perezosa*) 'she's lazy', *es una vaga* 'she's a lazy person'. *Unos/unas* is used in the plural to retain the distinction: *son desgraciados* 'they're unhappy', *son unos desgraciados* 'they're wretches' (the meaning changes and is quite strong: *un desgraciado* = 'a wretch', 'a "creep"').

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

(**a**) The indefinite article is not used after *a manera de*, *a modo de* and after *como* when it means 'in the capacity of' or 'by way of':

a manera de prólogo	by way of a prologue
a modo de bastón	as/like a walking stick
como ejemplo	as an example
Utilicé mi zapato como martillo	I used my shoe as a hammer
Renunció . . . "como único medio de conseguir la tranquilidad" (JA, Mex.)	He resigned . . . 'as the only way of achieving tranquillity'

(**b**) It is not used after *por* when it means 'instead of', 'in place of' or 'for' in phrases like: *por respuesta le dio un beso* '(s)he gave him/her a kiss as a reply', *no acepten un No por respuesta. ¿Entendido?* (MS. Mex., dialogue) 'don't take a "no" for an answer. Understood?'

(**c**) It is not usually used after *sin* without:

No vas a cortarlo sin cuchillo	You won't cut it without a knife
A veces se manchaba los anteojos sin marco (CF, Mex. In Spain *los anteojos = las gafas*)	Sometimes he smeared his frameless glasses
Ha venido sin camisa	(S)he's come without a shirt on
un gato sin cola	a cat without a tail

But if the idea of 'one' is emphasized, or, in most cases, if the noun is qualified by an adjective or clause, the indefinite article is required: *sin un céntimo* 'without a (single) cent', *sin un amigo a quien contar sus problemas* 'without a friend to tell his problems to'.

(**d**) It is not used after *con* when it means 'wearing', 'equipped with', and in many other adverbial phrases:

Siempre va con abrigo	(S)he always wears an overcoat
una casa con jardín	a house with a garden
La Esfinge es un león con cabeza de hombre (JLB, Arg.)	The Sphinx is a lion with a man's head
Lo escribí con (*un*) *lápiz*	I wrote it with a pencil

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

The indefinite article is omitted in the following types of phrase:

¡Extraña coincidencia!	What a strange coincidence!
¡Menudo follón!	What a mess!
¡Qué cantidad!/¡qué ruido!/¡qué pena!	What a quantity/noise/pity!
¿Cómo ha podido hacer tal/semejante cosa/ una cosa así?	How could (s)he have done such a thing?
media pinta/medio kilo	half a pint/kilo
cierta mujer/otra cerveza	a certain woman/another beer

See 10.7 for *cierto* and 10.13 for *otro*.

4.2 *Unos/Unas*

The Spanish indefinite article can be used in the plural with a variety of meanings (for a comparison of *algunos* and *unos*, which may sometimes both mean 'some', see 10.4.2. For the pronoun *uno*, see the Index).

4.2.1 Uses of *unos/unas*

(**a**) before numbers, 'approximately':

Costó unos treinta y cinco dólares	It cost about thirty-five dollars
. . . y unos cinco minutos después se detuvo (GGM, Col.)	and about five minutes later it stopped

(**b**) before plural nouns, 'some' or 'a few', or sometimes 'a set of':

De momento no, pero si me invitas a unas copitas a lo mejor me lo pienso (*CORPES*, Arg.)	Not right now, but if you buy me a couple of drinks, maybe I'll think about it
Todavía tenía unos restos de fe	(S)he still had some vestiges of faith
Sonreí . . . pero fue peor: unos dientes amarillos aparecieron (CRG, Sp.)	I smiled, but it was worse: a set of yellow teeth appeared
La compañía anunció unos resultados mucho peores de lo que esperaban los inversores (*El País*, Sp.)	The company announced a set of results much worse than investors expected
Está a unas calles de sus casas (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	It's a few streets away from their houses

When used thus it may simply moderate the force of a following noun. It can therefore add a modest note:

Mira estas fotos—son unas vistas tomadas en Guadalajara	Look at these photos – they're a couple of shots taken in Guadalajara
Se sintió viejo, triste, inútil, y con unos deseos de llorar tan urgentes que no pudo hablar más (GGM, Col.)	He felt old, sad, useless, and with an urge to weep that was so urgent that he could speak no more

(**c**) Before nouns that appear in the plural, *unos* shows that only one is meant. If the noun denotes symmetrical objects like trousers, binoculars, scissors, or before pairs of articles like gloves, shoes, *unos/unas* means 'a pair of':

Me caí por unas escaleras/por una escalera	I fell down some stairs
Voy a tomarme unas vacaciones	I'm going to have a holiday/vacation
unos pantalones/unas gafas/unas cortinas	a pair of trousers (US pants)/glasses/curtains
Llevaba unas botas de ante azul (ES, Mex.)	She was wearing a pair of blue suede boots

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

Son payasos	They're (circus) clowns
Son unos payasos	They're (acting like) clowns
Son zorros	They're foxes (species)
Son unos zorros	They're really cunning/like foxes

(**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, as in *son místicos* 'they're mystic(al)', *son unos místicos* 'they're mystics/day-dreamers'. See 4.1.11 for examples.

(1) Sometimes use of *unos* makes little difference: *el pacifismo debería traducirse en unos comportamientos políticos que no tuviesen ninguna indulgencia con los violentos* (*La Vanguardia*, Sp., *unos* optional) 'pacifism ought to be translated into (a set of) patterns of political behaviour which show no indulgence towards the violent'.

(2) *Unos* cannot be used to answer *¿cuántos?* 'how many?' The *NGLE* 20.3u notes that to the question *¿cuántos estudiantes había?* one can reply *algunos*, *pocos*, *unos cuantos*, *varios* ('several') or with a number, but not **unos*, just as one would probably not reply 'some' in English.

(3) *Unos cuantos/unas cuantas* may be used to mean 'a few', 'couple of': *si un mesero tardaba demasiado en traernos la cuenta daba unos cuantos gritos en francés* (ES, Mex., dialogue; *mesero = camarero*

in Spain) 'if a waiter took too long to bring us the bill/check she uttered a couple of shouts in French'.

4.2.2 Omission of *unos/unas*

There is a widespread tendency in written Spanish, especially in newspapers, to avoid the use of *unos* (and of *algunos*) in sentences of the kind *expertos americanos afirman que . . .* 'American experts claim that . . .'. This journalistic trick hides the fact that only a few experts were actually consulted. Spoken Spanish requires *los* if the meaning is 'all American experts', *algunos* if the meaning is 'some'.

In other cases, omission produces a literary effect: *eléctricas letras verdes intermitentes anunciaron la salida del vuelo* (MVM, Sp.) 'flashing green electric lights announced the departure of the flight', where *unas letras verdes* would have been more usual. Also *días después, una noche, luces verdes parpadearon en los cristales de mis balcones* (JMa, Sp.) 'one night a few days later green lights flickered in my balcony windows'.

5 Adjectives

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- The forms of adjectives (Section 5.2)
- Compound adjectives like 'light blue', 'socio-political' (Sections 5.2 and 5.4)
- Shortened adjectives (e.g. *buen* for *bueno*) (Section 5.5)
- Agreement of adjectives (Section 5.6)
- Adjectives of place (e.g. *americano*, *madrileño*) (Section 5.7)
- The suffix *-ísimo* (Section 5.8)
- The position of adjectives (Section 5.10)
- 'Relational' adjectives like *industria hotelera* 'hotel industry' (see Glossary) (Section 5.11)

5.1 General remarks about Spanish adjectives

(**a**) Nearly all Spanish adjectives agree with nouns and pronouns in number, and many also agree in gender. They therefore either have two forms, e.g. *natural/naturales*, or four, e.g. *bueno/buena/buenos/buenas.* A few, e.g. *macho* 'male', *violeta* 'violet', are invariable in form.

(**b**) The position of adjectives is a subtle question, the difference between *un problema difícil* and *un difícil problema* 'a difficult problem' being virtually untranslatable in English.

(**c**) It is necessary to distinguish 'descriptive' adjectives (*adjetivos calificativos*), e.g. 'a *big* book', 'a *blond* girl' from 'relational' adjectives (*adjetivos relacionales*), e.g. 'a *nuclear* power-station', 'a *pedestrian* crossing'. See Glossary for definitions.

(**d**) Many, but not all, Spanish adjectives become nouns if a determiner (see Glossary) is added: *joven/estas jóvenes* 'young'/'these young women'; see 5.9b. Nouns can also occasionally be used like adjectives, as in *ella es más mujer que Julia* 'she's more (of a) woman than Julia' (or 'more feminine'); see 5.9a.

However, adjectives are formed in unpredictable ways *from* nouns, e.g. *automóvil – automovilístico*, *metal – metálico*, *leche* 'milk' *lechal*, *lechoso* and *lácteo.*

(**e**) Some adjectives can be used with object pronouns and the verb *ser*: *me es fácil* 'it's easy for me', *nos son imprescindibles* 'they're indispensable to us'; but most cannot. See 14.6.3 for discussion.

(**f**) Adjectival participles ending in *-ante*, *-iente*, e.g. *vinculante* 'binding', *preocupante* 'worrying', are discussed under participles at 23.6.

(**g**) The gerund in *-ndo* is a verb form and must not be used as an adjective: *una muñeca que anda* or *una muñeca andante* 'a walking doll', not *una muñeca andando* 'a doll walking'. For two exceptions to this rule, see 5.3. For a discussion of the Gerund see Chapter 24.

(**h**) Spanish adverbs are invariable in form, even when they look like adjectives: *los teléfonos están fatal* 'the phones are in a dreadful state', *estamos mejor* 'we're feeling better'. See 35.3.3. for discussion.

5.2 Forms of adjectives

There are three types of Spanish adjectives:

- Type 1 adjectives agree in number and gender with the noun or pronoun (5.2.1)
- Type 2 adjectives agree in number but not gender (5.2.2)
- Type 3 adjectives do not change their form: they are not numerous (5.2.3 and 5.2.4)

5.2.1 Type 1 adjectives (agree in number and gender)

These include adjectives that end with: *-o*, *-án*, *-és*, *-ín*, *-ón*, *-or* (with the exceptions like *inferior* listed below), *-ote* and *-ete.*

For *macho*, *modelo*, *oro* see 5.2.3–4; for *cortés*, *descortés*, *montés*, *afín* and *marrón* see 5.2.2.

How to form the feminine singular of type 1 adjectives:

	Masculine singular	**Feminine singular**
ends with a vowel	*bueno*	*buena* 'good'
ends with a consonant	*hablador*	*habladora* 'talkative'

	Masculine plural	**Feminine plural**
ends with a vowel	*buenos*	*buenas*
ends with a consonant	*habladores*	*habladoras*

Important: in writing, a final *-z* is replaced by *c* before *e*. Any accent on the final vowel of the masculine singular disappears, as in the cases of *inglés*, *musulmán*, *pillín* in the following chart:

Further examples of type 1 adjectives (agreeing in number and gender)

Singular		**Plural**		
Masculine	**Feminine**	**Masculine**	**Feminine**	
redondo	*redonda*	*redondos*	*redondas*	round
inglés	*inglesa*	*ingleses*	*inglesas*	English
musulmán	*musulmana*	*musulmanes*	*musulmanas*	Muslim
pillín	*pillina*	*pillines*	*pillinas*	mischievous
regordete	*regordeta*	*regordetes*	*regordetas*	plump/chubby
español	*española*	*españoles*	*españolas*	Spanish
andaluz	*andaluza*	*andaluces*	*andaluzas*	Andalusian
batallador	*batalladora*	*batalladores*	*batalladoras*	battling/fighting

(1) *Español* and *andaluz* are type 1 adjectives and have a feminine in *-a*: *española*, *andaluza*, but other adjectives ending in -z or -l belong to type two, e.g. *feroz* 'ferocious', *natural*.

(2) Eleven adjectives that end with *-or* and have a comparative meaning are type 2, i.e. they have no separate feminine form. These are (singular-plural):

anterior – anteriores previous
exterior – exteriores outer
inferior – inferiores lower/inferior
interior – interiores inner/interior

mayor – mayores greater/older
mejor – mejores better
menor – menores minor/smaller/younger
peor – peores worse
posterior – posteriores later/subsequent
superior – superiores upper/superior
ulterior – ulteriores later/further

Exception: *la madre superior**a*** 'mother superior' of a religious order.

(3) *Cortés*, 'courteous' and *descortés* 'discourteous' are type 2 adjectives, i.e. they have no feminine form. *Montés* 'wild', i.e. not domesticated, is often type 2: *la cabra montés* 'wild goat', but also *la cabra montesa*. These are the only adjectives ending in *-és* that have no separate feminine form.

(4) *Marrón* 'brown' and *afín* 'related'/'similar' are type 2 and therefore have no feminine form: *una camisa marrón*, 'a brown shirt', *ideas afines* 'related ideas'.

5.2.2 Type 2 adjectives (no separate feminine form)

No difference between masculine and feminine. This class includes: (**a**) nearly all adjectives whose masculine singular ends with a consonant, except those ending in *-ín*, *-án*, *-ón*, *-or*, *-és*, which are nearly all type 1; (**b**) adjectives whose singular ends with *-a*, *-e*, *-ú*, *-í*.

The plural is formed: (**a**) if the adjective ends in a consonant or *-í* or *-ú*, by adding *-es*. In writing, a final *-z* is replaced by *c* before *e*; (**b**) in all other cases, by adding *-s*.

Singular and plural of type 2 adjectives

Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
socialista	*socialistas* socialist	*azul*	*azules* blue
grande	*grandes* big	*gris*	*grises* grey/gray
imponente	*imponentes* imposing	*feliz*	*felices* happy
útil	*útiles* useful	*nacional*	*nacionales* national
iraní	*iraníes/iranís* Iranian	*feroz*	*feroces* fierce
hindú	*hindúes* (Asian) Indian	*ruin*	*ruines* despicable
cortés	*corteses* courteous	*regular*	*regulares* regular/'so-so'

(1) Adjectives ending in *-í* usually make their plural in *-ís* in spontaneous speech and often in print, e.g. *pakistanís*, *israelís*; but the ending *-íes* is the formal written form. Some words, e.g. *maorí/maoríes* or *maorís* 'Maori' are uncertain, but at the present stage of the language, *-íes* is still felt to be the correct formal plural of most adjectives ending in *-í* and is recommended by the Academy although the forms in *-ís* are now accepted.

(2) If a diminutive or augmentative suffix is added to a type 2 adjective it then becomes type 1: *mayor* 'large'/'older'-*mayorcito/mayorcita* 'grown-up'; *grande* 'big'-*grandote/grandota* 'extremely large'; *vulgar* 'vulgar'-*vulgarzote/vulgarzota* 'pretty vulgar'.

(3) *Dominante* occasionally forms a very colloquial feminine *dominanta* 'bossy'/'domineering'. A few other popular or slang forms in *-nta* occur, e.g. *atorrante/atorranta* (Lat. Am.) 'lazy'/'loafer'; but other adjectives ending in *-nte* are not marked for gender whereas some nouns ending in *-nte* are. See 1.2.7 and 23.6 for further discussion. The very common colloquial Mexican adjective *padre* 'great'/'fantastic' is type 2: *¡qué padres están esos lentes!* (Sp. *las gafas*) 'those glasses (i.e. spectacles, eye-glasses) look great!'

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

These have only one form and are not numerous: *una rata macho* 'male rat', *unas ratas macho* 'male rats'. (See also 2.1.9 for discussion of the plural of compound nouns like *perros policía* 'police dogs', *hombres rana* 'frogmen'.) Other examples are: *alerta** 'alert' (*estamos alerta* 'we're alert'), *los puntos clave** 'the key issue(s)', *encinta** 'pregnant' (literary: Seco recommends plural *encintas*), *estándar* 'standard', *extra** 'extra', *hembra* 'female' (see 1.3), *gratis* 'free' (i.e. cost-free); *modelo* 'model', *monstruo* 'monster', *sport* (*los coches sport* 'sports cars'), *tabú** 'taboo', *ultra** 'extreme right-wing' (the noun *los ultras* often = 'hooligans'). Foreign words like *light*, *heavy* and *crack* (= 'brilliant', 'outstanding') are also invariable, as, usually, is *porno*.

(1) 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* (MVLl, Pe.) 'our obligation is to live constantly alert'.

(2) Although they look like nouns, *maestro*, *virgen*, *perro*, *gigante* and *esnob* agree like normal adjectives: *llaves maestras* 'master keys', *tierras vírgenes* 'virgin territories', *¡qué vida más perra!* 'what a rotten life!', *berenjenas gigantes* 'giant aubergines'/US 'eggplants'.

(3) Type 3 (invariable) adjectives also occur in French, cf. *des chemises marron* 'brown shirts', but French words like *violète*, *extra*, *tabou*, *modèle*, *rose* have separate plural forms.

5.2.4 Invariable colour adjectives

The more common colour adjectives – e.g. *negro* 'black', *rojo* 'red', *azul* 'blue' – are ordinary type 1 or type 2 adjectives. However, any suitable noun, preceded by *color*, *de color* or *color de*, can be used: *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/malva/violeta/esmeralda* 'three orange/pink/mauve/violet/emerald buttons', *corbatas salmón* 'salmon-colour ties', *cintas fresa* 'strawberry-coloured ribbons'. Similar nouns are:

añil indigo	*canela* cinnamon	*granate* dark red	*turquesa* turquoise
azafrán saffron	*chocolate* chocolate brown	*lila* lilac	*vino* wine-coloured
beis beige	*escarlata* scarlet	*oro* gold	*violeta* violet
azur azure	*grana* dark red	*paja* straw	
café coffee brown		*sepia* sepia	

(1) Colloquially, and in some writers, especially Latin-American, *naranja*, *rosa*, *malva*, *violeta* and a few others may be pluralized: *flores malvas* 'mauve flowers', *las uñas violetas* 'violet fingernails' (CB, Sp.), *. . . los ojos violetas eran de Mary* (CF, Mex.) 'the violet eyes were Mary's', *rayos ultravioletas* (*Granma*, Cu.) 'ultraviolet rays'. But this generally seems to be avoided, especially in Spain: *pliegos de papel azules, malva, rosa, verdes* (FU, Sp.) 'blue, mauve, pink, green folds of paper', *rayos ultravioleta* (*El País*, Sp.), *la muchacha de ojos violeta* (CF, Mex.) 'the girl with violet eyes'. *Carmesí* 'crimson' is usually invariable but is occasionally type 2 (i.e. *carmesíes*), but cf. *grandes rosas carmesí* (AG, Sp.) 'large, crimson roses'.

(2) These adjectives are not placed before a noun. *Como sonreía la rosa mañana . . .* (Antonio Machado, Sp., pre-1910) 'as pink dawn was smiling . . .' is a rare exception.

(3) *Color* or *de color* is usually inserted before the more exotic hues: *eran ambas prendas de color salmón* (JM, Sp.) 'both articles of clothing were salmon colour', *la pantalla de moaré color geranio* (IA, Sp.) 'the geranium-coloured moiré lampshade'.

(4) *Beige* is pronounced as in French or English in Latin America, *beis* in Spain. The latter spelling is recommended by *El País* and the Academy.

5.2.5 Compound adjectives of colour

All compound colours of the type 'dark blue', 'light green', 'signal red' are usually invariable in form (in this respect Spanish resembles French, e.g. *des yeux bleu clair*):

hojas verde oscuro	dark green leaves
calcetines rojo claro	pale/light red socks
una masa gris castaño	a grey/US gray-brown mass
[*Mis ojos*] *son azul pálido* (EP, Mex.)	My eyes are pale blue

The *NGLE* 13.7n reports examples of pluralization in good writers, e.g. *ojos azules claros* 'bright blue eyes', but prefers the invariable forms.

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

(2) 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'. These agree like normal adjectives: *verdinegros/verdinegras*, etc.

(3) There is no single word for 'brown' in European Spanish. *Marrón* (type 2) is chiefly used for artificial things like shoes and also for eyes. *Castaño* is used for hair and eyes: *pelo castaño*, *ojos castaños*. 'Brown skin' is *piel morena*. 'Brown earth' is *tierra parda* or *tierra rojiza*. *Café* (no agreement) or *color café* is used for 'brown' in many parts of Latin America.

5.3 *Hirviendo* and *ardiendo*

Gerunds (see Glossary) cannot be used as adjectives in Spanish: one cannot say **un objeto volando* for 'a flying object' which is *un objeto volante*; see 24.3 for details. But there are two exceptions, *hirviendo* 'boiling' and *ardiendo* 'burning' which look like gerunds but can be used as adjectives:

Tráeme agua hirviendo	Bring me some boiling water
Tienes la frente ardiendo	Your forehead is burning
Yo más bien soy un carbón ardiendo (i.e. sexually excited; MVLl, Pe., dialogue)	I'm more like a burning coal

(1) *Hirviendo*, *ardiendo* are invariable in form, take no suffixes and cannot appear before a noun. *Chorreando* 'dripping wet' may be another exception in *llevo la ropa chorreando* 'my clothes are dripping wet'. *Hirviente* for *hirviendo* is heard in Latin America.

5.4 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'.

(1) In adjectives joined by hyphens only the second word agrees with the noun: *movimientos político-militares* 'political-military movements', *teorías histórico-críticas* 'historical-critical theories'. Such examples excepted, use of hyphens to join words is nowadays rare in Spanish; cf. *contrarrevolucionario* 'counter-revolutionary', *latinoamericano* 'Latin-American'. See 44.4.6 for the use of the hyphen in these words.

5.5 Short forms of some adjectives

Important: a number of common adjectives lose their final syllable in certain circumstances.

(**a**) *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 formal literary styles, especially before a vowel. This archaism is rare nowadays, but cf. *¿busca un nuevo grande amor?* (JCC, Sp.) 'is he seeking a new great love?', *. . . y con un grande alboroto de pitos y timbales* (GGM, Col.) '. . . and with a great din of whistles and kettledrums'.

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

alguno: *algún remoto día* some remote day
bueno: *un buen cocinero* a good cook
malo: *un mal ingeniero* a bad engineer
ninguno: *en ningún momento* at no moment
postrero: *tu postrer día* (archaic) your last day
primero: *mi primer amor* my first love
tercero: *el tercer hombre* the third man

In all cases, the full form is used if a 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'.

(1) *Grande* is not shortened if *más* precedes: *el más grande artista de su especialidad en América* (EP, Mex.) 'the greatest artist in his field in America' (or *el mayor artista*), *la más grande ofensiva de terrorismo dinamitero* (GGM, Col.) 'the biggest terrorist bombing campaign'. After *tan*, *gran* is usual – *tan gran desastre* 'such a great disaster'– but *grande* is found in very literary styles.

(2) Popular speech, especially Latin-American, sometimes uses short forms of adjectives before feminine nouns. This is also seen in some 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*. But if an adjective comes between *primero* or *tercero* and a masculine noun, either form is allowed: *su primer*(*o*) *y único amor* 'his/her first and only love', but only *su primera y única novela* (examples from *NGLE* 21.4f).

(3) *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).

(4) For *alguna* and *ninguna* before feminine nouns beginning with a stressed *a-* or *ha-* see 3.1.2, 10.4 and 27.5.5. For *cualquiera* see 10.8. For the short forms of *tanto* and *cuánto* (*tan* and *cuán*) see 10.16 and 28.6.2.

5.6 Agreement of adjectives

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 1.2.11.

5.6.1 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* (Sp.) 'single-dish courses', usually mystifyingly translated in Spanish restaurants as 'combined plates': it means meat and vegetables served foreign-style on one plate; *cien mil pesos mexicanos*, '100,000 Mexican pesos'.

(**b**) One or more feminine nouns require a feminine adjective: *la Grecia antigua* 'ancient Greece', *películas chinas y rusas* 'Russian and Chinese films', *mi madre es inglesa* 'my mother's English'.

(**c**) Two or more nouns of different gender require a masculine plural adjective: *profesores y profesoras ingleses* 'English male and female teachers', *puentes y casas decrépitos* 'derelict bridges and houses'.

(1) French rejects a masculine adjective following a feminine noun: **des hommes et des femmes gros* is incorrect, but *hombres y mujeres gordos* 'fat men and women' is good Spanish.

(2) Seco (1998), 124, notes the possibility of singular agreement with two or more nouns denoting a single complex idea, e.g. *talento y habilidad extremada* 'extreme talent and skill' for *talento y habilidad extremados*.

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

(4) Adverbs that have the form of adjectives are invariably masculine singular in form: *María habla muy claro* 'Maria speaks very clearly', *estamos fatal* 'we're in a terrible state/fix'. See 35.3.3 for further discussion.

5.6.2 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* clearly refers to both)	They were looking for an open store or (an open) restaurant
Buscaban la mujer o el hombre capaces de asumir el cargo (for the absence of personal *a* see 26.2)	They were looking for the woman or man capable of taking on the job

(**b**) With *ni* 'nor' a plural verb is usual: *ni Mario ni Juan eran tontos* 'neither Mario nor Juan was stupid'.

5.6.3 Agreement with collective nouns

An adjective that modifies a collective noun is usually singular: *la mayoría está convencida . . .* 'the majority is/are convinced'; but there are exceptions, discussed at 2.3.1.

5.6.4 Agreement of adjectives placed before a noun

When an adjective precedes two or more nouns and qualifies them all, it usually agrees only with the first. This avoids the awkward combination of a plural adjective with a singular noun or a masculine adjective with a feminine noun, e.g. to avoid the peculiar ?*frescos rosas . . .* below:

su habitual sabiduría y tolerancia (ES, Arg.)	his usual wisdom and tolerance
esas frescas rosas y claveles (JLB, Arg.)	those fresh roses and carnations

(1) The plural may appear to avoid ambiguities: *sus amados hijo y nieto* 'his beloved son and grandson' (both beloved), *pobres Mario y Jean Pierre* (ABE, Pe., dialogue) 'poor Mario and Jean Pierre'.

(2) French does not allow this construction. Compare *una profund**a** inspiración y reflexión* and *une inspiration et une réflexion profond**es*** 'deep inspiration and reflection'.

5.6.5 'Neuter' agreement

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

Es absurdo hacerlo sin ayuda	It's absurd to do it without help
Es peligroso, pero lo haré	It's dangerous, but I'll do it
La miseria no tiene nada de sano y placentero (MVLl, Pe.)	Extreme poverty has nothing healthy or agreeable about it

(1) Neuter agreement is sometimes found even where a noun is present: *tampoco es buen**o** demasiada natación* (LG, Sp., dialogue) 'too much swimming isn't good either'. Here the adjective does not qualify the noun *natación* but the general idea of *hacer demasiada natación*; *buena* would also be correct. This phenomenon is quite common in everyday speech when the noun is not accompanied by a determiner (see Glossary), e.g. *mucha comida así no es bueno* (or *buena*) 'a lot of that sort of food isn't good', but always *esa comida no es buen**a*** 'that food's not good'.

(2) In the local language of Asturias, *el bable*, mass nouns have neuter gender to distinguish them from nouns referring to individual items. This sometimes creeps into the Castilian of that region, cf. *una cebolla fresca* 'a (single) fresh onion' and *cebolla fresc**o*** 'fresh onion' (i.e. a quantity of onions), . . . *fresca* in standard Spanish.

(3) For adjectives with the article *lo* (*lo bueno*, *lo grande*, etc.) see 8.2.

5.7 Formation of adjectives of place

5.7.1 Adjectives referring to countries and regions

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

Afganistán: *afgano*
Alemania: *alemán* German
Arabia Saudí/Saudita: *saudita/saudí*
Argelia: *argelino* Algerian
Argentina: *argentino*
Australia: *australiano*
Austria: *austriaco* or *austríaco*
Bélgica: *belga* Belgian
Bolivia: *boliviano*
Brasil: *brasileño*
Canadá: *canadiense*
Canarias: *canario*
Castilla: *castellano* Castile/Castilian. See (2)
Cataluña: *catalán*
Chile: *chileno*
China: *chino*
Colombia: *colombiano*
Costa Rica: *costarriqueño*, *costarricense*
Dinamarca: *danés* Danish
Ecuador: *ecuatoriano*
Egipto: *egipcio* (not **egipciano*)
Escocia: *escocés* Scottish
España: *español*. See (2)
Estados Unidos: *estadounidense.* See note 1
Europa: *europeo*
Finlandia: *finlandés*
Francia: *francés*
Gales: *galés* Wales, Welsh
Galicia: *gallego*
Gibraltar: *gibraltareño*
Gran Bretaña: *británico*
Grecia: *griego*
Guatemala: *guatemalteco*
Holanda: *holandés*
Honduras: *hondureño*
Hungría: *húngaro*
(*la*) *India*: *indio/hindú*. See note 3
Inglaterra: *inglés*, often used for 'British'
Irak: *iraquí*
Irán: *iraní*
Irlanda: *irlandés*
Israel: *israelí*
Italia: *italiano*
Japón: *japonés*
Letonia (not **Latvia*): *letón* Latvian
Lituania: *lituano*
Marruecos: *marroquí* Moroccan (*moro* is pejorative)
Méjico/México:*mejicano/mexicano.* See note 4
Nueva Zelanda/Nueva Zelandia: *neozelandés. Nueva Zelanda* in Spain, both in Lat. Am. The Academy rejects **neocelandés*
Nicaragua: *nicaragüense*
Noruega: *noruego* Norwegian
Panamá: *panameño*
Paraguay: *paraguayo*
Perú: *peruano*
Polonia: *polaco* Polish
Portugal: *portugués*
Puerto Rico: *puertorriqueño/portorriqueño*
El Salvador: *salvadoreño*
Rumanía or *Rumania*: *rumano*
Rusia: *ruso*
Suecia: *sueco* Swedish
Suiza: *suizo* Swiss
Uruguay: *uruguayo*
Vascongadas, *el País Vasco*: *vasco* Basque; see (5)
Venezuela: *venezolano*

(1) There is much vagueness surrounding words for the Americas. The adjective from *América Latina* or *Latinoamérica* is *latinoamericano*, and is much used by Latin-Americans to refer to themselves; it also includes Brazil and the French-speaking countries. *Hispanoamericano* or 'Spanish-American' is a linguistically more accurate but ethnically inaccurate term for the Spanish-speaking peoples of Latin America, but it is avoided by Latin-Americans.

In Latin America *norteamericano* means our 'American', though it logically includes Canadians. *Estadounidense* is often used for the adjective from *Estados Unidos*, also *estadunidense* in Mexico and in some near-by republics. For agreement with *Estados Unidos*, see 3.2.17 note 1.

Americano is often assumed to mean *latinoamericano* in Latin-America, but it usually means our 'American' in Spain, although according to the Academy it should only mean 'Latin-American'.

The adjective from *América del sur* or *Sudamérica* (or *Suramérica*) 'South America' – which does not include Central America, Mexico or the Caribbean – is ***sud****americano*. Seco (1998), 421, says that the forms *Suramérica*, *suramericano* are generally thought 'less acceptable' in Spain; *El País* (*Libro de estilo* 2014) has changed its mind and now prefers the prefix *sud-*, e.g. *Sudáfrica*, but insists on *suroeste* 'South-West', *sureste* 'South-East', etc. *Sudamérica* and *sudamericano* are often used informally in Spain to refer to anywhere south of the Río Grande.

Gringo is constantly used colloquially by Latin-Americans to refer to North Americans and by some to refer also to Europeans. It is not always unfriendly.

(2) *El castellano* is the Castilian language, i.e. what is described in this book, strictly speaking the dialect of Old Castile which became the majority language of Spain. Catalans, Basques, Galicians and some Latin-Americans sometimes object to *el castellano* being called *el español*.

(3) In Latin America the word *indio* is assumed to mean Native American, so *hindú* is constantly used for Asian Indian, although it properly means Hindu: *los empleados hindús del raj británico* (CF, Mex., dialogue), 'the Indian employees under the British Raj' (for *hindús* versus *hindúes* see 2.1.3c). *El País* insists on *indio* for Asian Indian. *Los hinduistas* is nowadays often used for 'Hindus'. In Spain *indios americanos* or, less commonly, *amerindios*, is used for Native Americans. *Indiano* is used to denote a 'colonial' who made money in Latin America and returned to Spain.

(4) Mexicans write *México/mexicano* even though they are pronounced *Méjico*, *mejicano*: the *x* commemorates the *Mexica* or Aztecs. The Latin-American press and *El País* (Sp.) and *El Mundo* (Sp.) use these forms, and the Academy prefers them, but the spellings with *j* are common in Spain: *Abc* and *La Vanguardia* of Spain use them. A few other Mexican place names are similarly affected, e.g. Oaxaca, Xalapa (or Jalapa). *El País* insists on the spelling *Texas* and on the pronunciation [té-χas]; the adjective is *tejano* [te-χá-no]; the Academy accepts *Tejas* and *Texas. X* is pronounced 'sh' in some Mexican place names, e.g. Xcaret, Tlaxcala.

(5) The Basque words *Euskadi* 'Basque Country' (*el País Vasco*), *euskalduna* 'Basque'/'Basque-speaker', *euskera* 'the Basque language', are commonly seen in Spanish newspapers.

5.7.2 Adjectives referring to towns

There is no general rule for forming adjectives referring to towns, and some places pride themselves on obscure forms, e.g. *Huelva – onubense*, *El Escorial – gurriato* or *escurialense*. There are hundreds of these demonyms or *gentilicios*: the Spanish version of Wikipedia includes them in its articles on towns and cities. A few common examples are:

Álava: *alavés*
Alcalá: *complutense.* See note 1
Ávila: *abulense*
Badajoz: *pacense*
Barcelona: *barcelonés*
Berlín: *berlinés*
Bilbao: *bilbaíno*
Bogotá: *bogotano*
Boston: *bostoniano*
Buenos Aires: *porteño/bonaerense*. See note 2
Burgos: *burgalés*
Cádiz: *gaditano*
Caracas: *caraqueño*
Córdoba: *cordobés*
La Coruña: *coruñés*
Dublín: *dublinés*
Florencia: *florentino*
Granada: *granadino*
La Habana: *habanero*
Lima: *limeño*
Lisboa: *lisboeta* Lisbon
Londres: *londinense* (not **londiniense*)
Los Ángeles: *angelino*
Madrid: *madrileño*
Málaga: *malagueño*
Miami: *miamense*
Moscú: *moscovita*
Murcia: *murciano*
Nápoles: *napolitano*
Nueva York: *neoyorquino*
Pamplona: *pamplonés/pamplonica* invariable
París: *parisiense.* See note 3
La Paz: *paceño/pacense*
Quito: *quiteño*
Río de Janeiro: *carioca*
Roma: *romano*
Salamanca: *salmantino/salamanqués*
San Francisco: *sanfranciscano*
San Sebastián: *donostiarra*
Santander: *santanderino*
Santiago: *santiaguino* (Ch.), *santiagués* (Sp.)
Segovia: *segoviano*
Sevilla: *sevillano*
Toledo: *toledano*
Valencia: *valenciano*
Valladolid: *vallisoletano*
Washington: *washingtoniano*
Zaragoza: *zaragozano*

(1) *La complutense* is the old university of Alcalá de Henares, now located in Madrid.

(2) *Bonaerense* refers to the province of Buenos Aires, *porteño* only to the city, although *bonaerense* is sometimes also used for the city.

(3) *El País* bans the use of *parisién* and *parisino* in its columns, but they are heard colloquially. The Academy accepts *parisino.*

5.8 Intensive forms of the adjective

5.8.1 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 it should be used sparingly. This suffix is sometimes misnamed a 'superlative' suffix, but it cannot be used in comparisons and is best thought of simply as an intensifier. The modern tendency is to prefer *muy* 'very' plus a normal adjective.

-ísimo cannot be added to all adjectives and there are irregularities. *-ísimo* is added after removing any final vowel: *grande – grandísimo*, *guapa – guapísima*. The following spelling changes occur:

(**a**) adjectives ending in *-co/-ca* and *-go/-ga* require a silent *u* 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 – felicísimo* 'happy'.

(**c**) For adjectives ending in two vowels, see 5.8.2.

(**d**) Adjectives ending in *-ble* change this ending to *-bil*: *amable – amabilísimo* 'friendly', *posible– posibilísimo* 'possible'.

5.8.2 Adjectives which do not take *-ísimo*

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

(**a**) those ending in *-í*, *-uo*, *ío* or *eo* if not stressed on the *e*: *baladí* 'trivial', *arduo* 'arduous', *espontáneo* 'spontaneous', *rubio* 'blond' (*rubísimo* is possible but infrequent), *tardío* 'late'.

Exceptions: *agrio – agrísimo* 'sour', *amplio – amplísimo* 'wide'/'extensive', *frío – friísimo* 'cold', *limpio – limpísimo* 'clean', *pío – piísimo* 'pious', *sucio – sucísimo* 'dirty'.

(**b**) Words stressed on the last syllable but two (*palabras esdrújulas*) ending in *-ico*, *-fero*, *-éneo*, *-voro*, *político* 'political', *mamífero* 'mammal(ian)', *homogéneo* 'homogeneous', *carnívoro* 'carnivorous'.

(**c**) Diminutives and comparatives: *grandote* 'enormous', *menor* 'smaller'/'younger'. But *mayorcísimo* 'very old' is heard, e.g. *es mayorcísima* 'she's very old/ancient'.

(**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 a few exceptions, e.g. *agradable – agradabilísimo* 'agreeable', *hábil – habilísimo* 'skilful'.

(**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* 'singular'.

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

5.8.3 Irregular intensive forms

(**a**) The following are best learned as separate words:

antiguo: *antiquísimo* ancient
áspero harsh *aspérrimo* rough
cursi: *cursilísimo* affected/pseudo-refined
inferior: *ínfimo* (literary) inferior/least/lowest
joven: *jovencísimo* young
lejos: *lejísimos* distant/far
mayor: *máximo* supreme/greatest
menor: *mínimo* slightest/least
mejor: *óptimo* superb (literary)
peor: *pésimo* bad/dreadful
superior: *supremo* superior/supreme

(**b**) Some of the following forms are occasionally found in older texts and/or in flowery written styles: the current form (if any) follows the literary form:

amigo friendly/keen *amicísimo/amiguísimo*
célebre famous *celebérrimo*
cruel cruel *crudelísimo/cruelísimo*
fértil fertile *ubérrimo/fertilísimo*
fiel faithful *fidelísimo/fidelísimo*
libre free *libérrimo/muy libre*
magnífico magnificent *magnificentísimo/*
pobre poor *paupérrimo/pobrísimo*
sabio wise *sapientísimo*
sagrado sacred *sacratísimo*

(**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'. Bracketed forms are literary:

bueno	*buenísimo*	(*bonísimo*)	good
cierto	*ciertísimo*	(*certísimo*)	certain
diestro	*diestrísimo*	(*destrísimo*)	skilled
fuerte	*fuertísimo*	(*fortísimo*)	strong
reciente	*recientísimo*	(*recentísimo*)	recent
tierno	*tiernísimo*	(*ternísimo*)	tender

In some words the diphthong is never modified, e.g. *viejo – viejísimo* 'old', *cuerdo – cuerdísimo* 'sane'.

5.9 Use of nouns as adjectives and adjectives as nouns

(a) Nouns may occasionally be used as adjectives:

Tienes que ser más persona decente — You've got to be more of a decent person
Este libro es menos novela que el otro — This book is less of a novel than the other

Such nouns are invariable in form, and when they are modified by words like *más*, *menos*, *tan,* they are not accompanied by a definite or indefinite article. See 28.4.1 for nouns and adjectives modified by *qué*: *¡qué bandido eres!* 'what a villain you are!'; *¡qué guapa estás!* 'you look great!'

(**b**) Spanish adjectives can very often be made into nouns by using a determiner (see Glossary): *valiente/un valiente* 'brave'/'a brave man', *viejo/tres viejas* 'old'/'three old women', *extranjero/los extranjeros* 'foreign'/'the foreigners'. The noun may acquire a special meaning, as in *impreso/un impreso* 'printed'/'a printed form', *helado/un helado* 'frozen'/'an ice-cream', *rojo/un rojo* 'red'/'a Communist'.

Some noun forms are simply not used: **sale con un feliz* is not said for '(s)he's going out with a happy man' = *sale con un hombre feliz*; *llegó con una chica guapa* '(s)he arrived with an attractive girl', not **con una guapa*, etc. The *NGLE* notes that nouns of negative meaning – *enfermo*, *calvo* 'bald', *ciego* 'blind', *discapacitado* 'handicapped', *manco* 'one-armed', *sordo* 'deaf', *malvado* 'wicked'– are more likely to be used as nouns than 'positive' ones, but only dictionary practice and reading can guide learners in this matter.

(1) *Uno* and not *un* is used for the masculine of adjectives when the latter are used as nouns. Thus *un parecido* = 'similarity', but *uno parecido* = 'a similar *one*', as in *le voy a encargar a alguna modista que haga uno parecido* (ABV, Sp., dialogue) 'I'm going to get a dressmaker to make one like it'. Cf. also *prefiero esta taza a una rota* 'I prefer this cup to a broken one'.

(2) See 4.1.11 on the use of the indefinite article to distinguish nouns from adjectives, as in *es grosero* 'he's rude' and *es un grosero* 'he's a rude person'.

5.10 Position of adjectives in relation to nouns

5.10.1 General

For the position of *alguno*, *ninguno*, *cualquiera*, *mismo*, possessive adjectives, etc., consult these words in the index. For the position of ordinal number adjectives, e.g. *primero* 'first', *sexto* 'sixth', see 11.12.3.

The position of Spanish adjectives before or after the noun they modify is more variable than in English ('a good book' but never *'a book good'), and a good deal more variable than in French. But the underlying rules that determine whether one says *un lejano ruido* or *un ruido lejano* 'a distant noise' are difficult to explain.

The basic rule for all adjectives other than ordinal numbers 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' is a restricted or specific type of wine; *las salchichas inglesas* 'English sausages' refers only to a specific kind of sausage. Non-restrictive adjectives refer to the whole of the thing denoted by the noun: *las aburridas conferencias del decano* 'the dean's boring lectures' and *la poco apetitosa cocina británica* 'unappetizing British cooking' are both generalizations and apply to every member or aspect of the thing referred to. Unfortunately the distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive adjectives is not always clear, so the decision about where to put the adjective sometimes relies on a feel for the language rare among non-natives.

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

If an English adjective sounds correct when spoken with a heavy stress – 'I don't like **sour** apples, but I do like **sweet** apples' – then it is almost certainly restrictive and its Spanish equivalent must 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. If one stresses 'beautiful' in 'the beautiful sun of Spain', it suggests that there is another less beautiful Spanish sun. This is absurd, so the Spanish adjective will probably precede the noun: *el hermoso sol de España*. Ordinal number adjectives do not follow this rule, cf. *está en el quinto capítulo, no en el cuarto* 'it's in the fifth chapter, not in the fourth'. See 11.12.3.

5.10.2 Examples of restrictive 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:

el pan integral wholemeal bread
el calentamiento global global warming
los cazas computarizados computerized fighter aircraft
la religión cristiana the Christian religion
la teoría cuántica quantum theory
la tracción delantera front-wheel drive
el vino tinto red wine
los canales digitales digital channels

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/son verdes.*

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

Tráigame una cuchara limpia Bring me a clean spoon (i.e. not a dirty one)
Tengo una camisa verde y otra azul I have a green shirt and a blue one
No queremos agua salada We don't want salty water

(**c**) Scientific or technical adjectives:

la gramática transformacional transformational grammar
la conexión inalámbrica wireless connection
el correo electrónico email*
el laboratorio lingüístico language laboratory
el soporte técnico technical support
la pantalla táctil touch screen

**El email* and, colloquially, *el mail* are common in spoken Spanish, but the Academy recommends *el correo electrónico*.

(**d**) Relational adjectives. These express the origin, substance, contents or purpose of a noun. Their use is discussed at 5.11:

el túnel ferroviario railway tunnel
la energía eólica wind energy
la nave espacial spaceship
la televisión infantil children's TV

(**e**) Adjectives of place, nationality, affiliation, which are almost always restrictive:

el clima argentino the Argentine climate
el campo inglés the English countryside
el Partido Democrático the Democratic Party

los monumentos mayas the Mayan monuments
el nacionalismo vasco Basque nationalism
la doctrina cristiana Christian doctrine

(1) Only the most far-fetched styles would use such scientific or technical adjectives poetically or as epithets, though some, e.g. *unilateral*, *microscópico*, (*p*)*sicoanalítico*, *materialista*, might conceivably be used as epithets (see 5.10.4a).

(2) Adjectives of nationality can occasionally be used as epithets when they express allegedly typical qualities (see 5.10.4a for a discussion of epithets): *mi española impulsividad me hace escribir estas líneas* (reader's letter, Sp.) 'my Spanish impulsiveness makes me write these lines'; *su británica reserva* 'her/his British reserve'. Adjectives of place are sometimes pre-posed in journalism before very well-known features, as in *la madrileña calle de Alcalá* 'the (typically) Madrid Alcalá street'.

5.10.3 Adjectives put before a noun to indicate impression, reaction or subjective assessment

The most common reason for putting an adjective before the noun is to emphasize its emotional 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 in context because the speaker wants to eliminate any allusion to another tragedy, poet or problem: in the previous example there is obviously no non-worrying greenhouse effect.

These pre-posed adjectives can describe the speaker's impression, assessment or evaluation of a thing, or its appearance. They include a vast range of adjectives indicating shape, distance, size, colour, texture, passage of time, praise, mood, blame or subjective appraisal of any kind. The more emotional the language, therefore, the more pre-posed adjectives are likely to occur, as in poetry, poetic prose, journalism and advertising. Examples:

las magníficas ruinas de Machu Picchu — the magnificent ruins at/of Macchu Picchu
¡No voy a permitir que a tu hija la envenenes con las ideas de tu enferma cabeza! (LE, Mex., dialogue) — I'm not going to let you poison your daughter with the ideas in your sick head!
un profesor, dueño de una amplísima cultura (SPl, Mex., dialogue) — a teacher, a highly educated man
¡Sensacional promoción de verano! — Sensational Summer Offer!
esta popular y veterana suite de diseño gráfico . . . — this popular and time-tested graphic design suite . . .
¡Convierte tus vídeos en auténticas películas! — Turn your videos into real films!

Sometimes the difference of meaning between post-posed and pre-posed adjectives can be important, as in *el poético lenguaje de Lorca* 'the poetic language of Lorca' (aesthetic opinion) 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' (an opinion) and *la novela decimonónica* 'the nineteenth-century novel' (factual). But very often a pre-posed adjective is merely more poetic or dramatic, a post-posed one more matter-of-fact. The following examples will help to train the ear:

*el **casi olvidado** nombre de James MacPherson* (JLB, Arg.) — the almost forgotten name of James MacPherson
*Hay barcos anclados en **permanente** contacto con los aviones nocturnos* (GGM, Col.) — There are boats anchored at sea in permanent contact with the night aircraft
*La revolución significó para mí una **justa** redistribución de la riqueza* (MVL, Pe.)l — The revolution meant for me a just redistribution of wealth

*una guirnalda de **blancas** flores* (LG, Sp.)	a wreath of white flowers
*La pera es de **fácil** digestión* (cookery book, Spain)	Pears are easily digested
*el **creciente** costo de la tierra urbana*	the rising cost of land in the cities

(1) The position of adjectives is 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.), *la banda ancha* 'broadband', *altos hornos* 'blast-furnaces', *en alta mar* 'on the high seas', *Dios Todopoderoso* 'Almighty God', *sentido común* 'common sense', etc.

(2) 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 frígidamente agresiva*, 'a frigidly aggressive girl', *con tres amigos igualmente roñosos* 'with three equally stingy friends'. Compare *anuncian una útil linterna* (not *linterna útil*) 'they are advertising a useful torch/US flashlight' and *anuncian una linterna **muy** útil* 'they are advertising a very useful torch/flashlight'. With *más* and *menos* either position is possible: *el más popular presentador de la TV italiana* 'the most popular presenter on Italian TV', or *el presentador más popular de la TV italiana.*

However, constructions like *la altamente reveladora noticia* 'the highly revealing news item', *esa siempre sorprendente inteligencia de los perros* (SG, Mex.) 'that ever surprising intelligence of dogs', *la sorprendente y para Julián desconocida noticia . . .* (IA, Sp.) 'the surprising and – for Julian – unknown news . . .' are quite common in literary styles.

5.10.4 Other uses of adjectives placed before the noun

The following types of adjectives are also placed before the noun:

(**a**) Epithets, i.e. adjectives used to describe typical or predicted qualities. These are not common in everyday or matter-of-fact language except in set phrases, but they are very common in literary, poetic, advertising or other types of emotive language:

mi distinguido colega	my distinguished colleague
el peligroso tigre asiático	the dangerous Asian tiger
un valiente torero	a brave bullfighter
los volubles dioses romanos	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 elephants are not typically lame; *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*)*sicológico*, since problems are not all or typically psychological.

(**b**) Adjectives that clearly refer to every one of the items denoted by a plural noun: *a Kevin lo único que le interesa son sus tontos juguetes y sus cómics* 'the only thing that interests Kevin is his stupid toys and his comics'. (JV, Mex.), where his sister is claiming that all his toys are stupid. More examples: *muchas gracias por las magníficas rosas* 'many thanks for the magnificent roses', *sus evasivas respuestas empezaban a irritarme* 'his/her evasive replies were starting to irritate me', *las simpáticas peticiones de nuestros oyentes* '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:

Se veía el imponente Everest	One could see imposing Mount Everest
el izquierdista Frente Farabundo Martí	the left-wing Farabundo Martí Front
tu alarmante edad . . .	your alarming age . . . (you only have one age)

But

Hay una Argentina montañosa y otra llana	There is a mountainous Argentina and a flat one,
También visitamos la ciudad moderna	We also visited the modern (part of the) city

(**c**) Intensifiers, hyperboles and swear words – the latter are extreme examples of adjectives used emotively and usually devoid of all real meaning:

mi increíble suerte	my incredible luck
¡este maldito ordenador! (Lat. Am. *computadora* or *computador*)	this damned computer!
Valiente soldado eres tú	A great soldier you are (I don't think . . .)
tu dichosa familia	your blessed family . . .
estas condenadas hormigas	these damned ants
cinco cochinos/piojosos euros	five lousy euros

5.10.5 Position of adjectives with nouns connected by *de*

Choice of position here depends on whether the noun phrase is a compound word, i.e. a new concept, or merely a loose cluster 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 inseparable: *una casa de muñecas barata* 'a cheap dolls' house', not **una casa barata de muñecas*. Only long familiarity with Spanish provides a guide as 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 buque de asalto anfibio	an amphibious assault craft
un curso básico de informática	a basic course in computing
un libro lleno de curiosas referencias de índole personal (JLB, Arg.)	a book full of curious references of a personal nature

In the case of adjectives that could come before the noun (see preceding sections), various solutions are possible: *una increíble cantidad de oro*, *una cantidad increíble de oro*, *una cantidad de oro increíble* 'an incredible amount of gold' are all possible.

(1) Relational adjectives (see 5.11) cannot be separated from their nouns: one cannot say **un virus peligroso informático* for *un peligroso virus informático* or *un virus informático peligroso* 'a dangerous computer virus'.

5.10.6 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 4 for the special case of *pequeño*.

According to the *GDLE*, 3.4.2.2, in the case of *bueno* and *malo*, the pre-posed adjective may unambiguously refer to competence rather than moral qualities. So *un buen poeta* may be a scoundrel

but a competent poet, whereas *un poeta bueno* may be a good poet and a good person. Likewise *un mal músico* and *un músico malo* 'a bad musician', *un buen amigo* = 'good as a friend' and *un amigo bueno* = 'a good friend and a good person'.

(**a**) Objective qualities

Tengo un abrigo bueno para los fines de semana, y uno regular para los laborables	I've got a good coat for weekends, and a so-so one for weekdays
Oscar Wilde dijo que no hay libros buenos o malos sino libros bien o mal escritos (JLB, Arg., contrast)	Oscar Wilde said there are no good or bad books only well or badly written books
Ponlo debajo del árbol grande	Put it under the big tree
Trae el martillo grande	Bring the big hammer
mi hermana mayor/menor	my elder/younger sister

(**b**) Subjective qualities

un buen carpintero	a good carpenter
un gran éxito	a great success
un gran ruido/poeta/embustero	a great noise/poet/fraud
los grandes narcotraficantes	the major drug dealers
un pequeño problema (see note 4)	a slight problem
el mayor poeta mexicano	the greatest Mexican poet
ni la menor impresión de insinceridad	not even the slightest impression of insincerity

(1) 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, e.g. *pasamos un mal rato* 'we had a bad time'.

(2) There are many set expressions: *lo hizo de buena gana* '(s)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* '(s)he always makes an effort with me', *¡qué mala pata!* 'what bad luck', etc.

(3) *Grande* is pre-posed when it means 'great', but it may mean 'big' in either position as in *estaba sentada cerca del gran ventanal/del ventanal grande* 'she was sitting near the big window'.

(4) *Un pequeño problema* is normal since *problema* is an abstract noun. However *una pequeña casa* is less usual than *una casita*. For discussion of this phenomenon see 43.2.

5.10.7 Position of *nuevo* and *viejo*

The usual explanation is that *nuevo* is put before the noun when it means 'another' and *viejo* is put before the noun when it means 'previous'/'long-standing': *tenemos un nuevo presidente/un presidente nuevo* 'we've got a new president', *nuevos progresos técnicos* 'new (i.e. more) technological developments'. Similarly *un viejo amigo* 'is an old friend' (i.e. long-standing) and *un amigo viejo* is old in years.

Nuevo is usually put after the noun 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'. But *viejo* may nevertheless 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'.

5.10.8 Adjectives whose meaning varies according to position

The following are some common cases 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**
antiguo	ancient	former or ancient
cierto	sure/unquestionable	a certain . . .
falso	forged/falsified	not real, 'pseudo-'
medio	average	half
pobre	poor (i.e. not rich)	miserable/wretched
raro	strange/rare	rare
rico	rich	delicious
semejante	similar	such a . . .
simple	simple-minded	simple (i.e. mere)
triste	sad	wretched
valiente	courageous	'great' (ironic)
verdadero	truthful	real/authentic
varios	assorted/various	several

For *mismo* see 10.11, *propio* 10.14, *solo/sólo* 10.15.

5.10.9 Adjectives that occur only in front of the noun

The following phrases contain adjectives that normally occur only in front of a noun:

Lo haré en ambos casos I'll do it in both cases
las llamadas democracias the so-called democracies
la mera mención del asunto the mere mention of the topic
Llevaba mucho dinero (S)he was carrying a lot of money
Busquemos otro médico Let's look for another doctor
Me dejó en pleno centro (S)he left me right in the town centre
menudo pájaro . . ./menudo follón . . . some guy . . ./some mess . . . (sarcastic tone)
pocas veces rarely, *poca paciencia* not much patience
el pretendido/presunto autor the alleged/supposed author
un sedicente budista a self-styled Buddhist
Trajeron sendos paquetes (literary) Each one brought a parcel
el supuesto ladrón the alleged thief
ante tamaña tontería in the face of such stupidity
No puedo comer tanta cantidad I can't eat such a quantity

5.11 Relational adjectives

'Relational' adjectives are usually equivalent to *de* plus a noun: *la vida familiar = la vida de familia* 'family life'. Spanish has numerous relational adjectives formed from nouns cf. *mañana* 'morning' – *matinal* (*la televisión matinal* 'breakfast TV'), *impuesto* 'tax' – *impositivo* (*política impositiva* 'taxation policy'), *agua* 'water' – *hidráulico* (*avión hidráulico* 'fire-fighting aircraft that sprays water'), or *acuático*: *plantas acuáticas* 'water-plants'/'aquatic plants'.

Relational adjectives cannot normally precede a noun (**matinal televisión* is not Spanish). They usually cannot be made comparative by using *más* or *menos*, and many of them cannot be predicates of verbs like *ser*: one can say *tasas universitarias* 'university fees', but not **estas tasas son universitarias*. There are exceptions. like *constitucional*, *acuático*: *estas enmiendas no son constitucionales* 'these amendments are not constitutional'.

New relational adjectives constantly appear, probably because the combination noun + adjective more effectively translates English compound nouns of the type 'computer virus' (*virus informático*), 'film text' (*texto fílmico*). Some of these formations are short-lived or are rejected as journalese or jargon.

There is no fixed rule for forming relational adjectives from nouns, and Latin-American coinages occasionally differ from Peninsular ones, cf. Sp. *presupuestario*, Lat. Am. *presupuestal* 'budget'; Sp. *programa de radio*, Lat. Am. *programa radial* 'radio program(me)'. In a few cases, e.g. *viento-eólico* 'wind' as in *la energía eólica* 'wind energy' (from *Eolo* 'Aeolus', the Greek god of the winds), *roca-rupestre* 'rock'/'cave' as in *el arte rupestre* 'cave art', *caza-cinegético* 'hunting' as in *club cinegético* 'hunting club', the adjective is derived from a completely different root. The following are taken from various printed sources:

***de* + noun**	**Relational adjective**
carestía del petróleo	*la carestía petrolera* high oil prices
crisis de la banca	*la crisis bancaria* bank crisis
defectos del oído	*los defectos auditivos* hearing deficiencies
industria de automóviles	*la industria automovilística* car industry
industria de hoteles	*la industria hotelera* hotel industry
peces de río	*los peces fluviales* river-fish
política de energía	*la política energética* energy policy
programa de televisión	*el programa televisivo* television programme
sindicato de pilotos	*el sindicato piloteril* pilots' union
centro de deportes	*el centro deportivo* sports centre
	el sistema operativo operating system
	la contaminación lumínica light pollution

(1) Important: in both languages an adjective may be descriptive or relational according to context: compare 'theatrical equipment' (relational = 'theatre equipment') and 'theatrical behaviour' (descriptive). Such pairs seem to be more common in Spanish and they may confuse English-speakers, who tend to forget that a word like *infantil* can mean 'children's' as well as 'childish'. Further examples:

una cantidad masiva a massive quantity	*los medios masivos* the mass media
una persona nerviosa a nervous person	*el gas nervioso* nerve gas
un gesto hospitalario a hospitable gesture	*un centro hospitalario* a hospital centre
la política defensiva defence policy	*la actitud defensiva* defensive attitude
la poesía amorosa love poetry	*una sonrisa amorosa* a loving smile

5.12 Translating the English prefix '*un-*'

The Spanish prefix *in-* is less common than the English 'un-' and English speakers must resist the temptation to invent imaginary words like **ineconómico* from 'uneconomical' (*poco económico*). The two languages often coincide: *indeseable* 'undesirable', *inimaginable* 'unimaginable', *insobornable*

'unbribable', *insoportable* 'unbearable', *intocable* 'untouchable', *irreal* 'unreal', *improbable* 'improbable'. But often a solution with *poco*, *no* or *sin* must be found:

no autorizado/sin autorizar unauthorized	*poco inteligente* unintelligent
no usado/sin usar unused	*poco profesional* unprofessional
poco amistoso unfriendly	*sin comprender* uncomprehending
poco apetitoso unappetizing	*sin convencer* unconvinced
poco atractivo unattractive	*sin principios* unprincipled
poco caritativo uncharitable	*sin probar* untried

(1) The above list shows that *poco*, like the French *peu*, negates an adjective: *poco cansado* means 'not tired', not 'a bit tired'. A preceding indefinite article restores the meaning 'little': *un poco cansado* 'a bit tired'/'slightly tired'.

6 Comparison of adjectives and adverbs

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- Comparison of adjectives and adverbs (how to say 'more/less beautiful'), etc. (Sections 6.1–2)
- The superlative of adjectives ('most/least beautiful', etc.). (Section 6.3)
- The superlative of adverbs ('most fluently'/'least convincingly', etc.). (Section 6.4)
- The difference between *más/menos que* and *más/menos de.* (Section 6.5)
- When to use *más/menos del/de la/de los/de las que* and *más/menos de lo que.* (Section 6.6)
- *Mayor* and *menor.* (Sections 6.8–6.9)
- Comparisons of equality: 'as . . . as . . .', 'the same as. . .', etc. (Section 6.15)

Comparison of adjectives in Spanish is not complicated, but English-speaking students are often affected 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*).

Important: English and French-speakers must remember to use subject personal pronouns after comparisons: *es más rubia que* ***yo/tú*** *= elle est plus blonde que moi/toi* 'she's blonder than me/you', never * *. . . que mí/ti.*

6.1 Regular comparison of adjectives and adverbs

With the exception of the five adjectives and adverbs listed at 6.2, 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	Lemons are bitterer than cherries
Tú andas más despacio que yo	You walk more slowly than me
Más vale solos que mal acompañados (MVLl, Pe., dialogue)	Better alone than in bad company

(1) For the difference between *más que/menos que* and *más de/menos de* see 6.5.

(2) Important: 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, as in *es más joven de lo que parece* '(s)he's younger than (s)he looks'. See 6.6 for discussion.

(3) Some people require that *más* and *menos* should be repeated before adjectives and adverbs, as in *hablamos del artista* ***más*** *famoso y* ***más*** *buscado del arte urbano* (APR, Sp., dialogue) 'we're talking about the most famous and (most) sought-after wall artist (i.e. graffiti artist)', *es menos tímido y menos callado que su hermano* 'he's less shy and (less) quiet than his brother'. But this rule is not respected everywhere: *nunca he visto ojos más limpios y felices . . .* (CF, Mex., dialogue) 'I've never seen clearer and happier eyes . . .', *. . . uno de los intelectuales marxistas más analítico, filósofo y racional de la izquierda comunista* (CR, Mex.) 'one of the most analytical, philosophical and rational Marxist intellectuals on the communist left'.

(4) The comparative of adverbs and, in some circumstances, of adjectives, has the same form as the superlative. See 6.3.2 for discussion.

(5) '. . . than ever . . .' is translated . . . *que nunca* (but 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 27.4.

(6) The verb *llevar*, which has numerous meanings (see Index), is used in personal comparisons involving age or height: *me lleva dos años/dos centímetros* '(s)he's two years older/two centimetres taller than me', *aunque me llevaba muchos años mi actitud estaba teñida de un extraño y respetuoso deseo de protegerla* (JM, Sp.) 'although she was many years older than me my attitude was coloured by a strange and respectful desire to protect her', *¿Cuántos años le llevas, se puede saber?* (MVLl, Pe., dialogue) 'how many years older than her are you, may one know?'

6.2 Irregular comparative forms

There are five adjectives and adverbs that have irregular comparative forms:

Adjective	Adverb		Comparative singular	Comparative plural (adjective only)	
bueno	good	*bien* well	*mejor*	*mejores*	better
malo	bad	*mal* badly	*peor*	*peores*	worse
pequeño		small	*menor/más pequeño*	*menores/más pequeños*	smaller
grande		big	*mayor/más grande*	*mayores/más grandes*	greater/bigger
poco		few/not much	*menos*	*menos* (invariable)	less/fewer

Important: these comparative forms have no separate feminine forms.

(1) when the above words are used as adverbs only the singular form is used:

Sus hermanas hablan mejor que ella	Her/His sisters speak better than she does
Aquí estamos mejor	It's better for us here/We're better off here

(2) *Menos* and *más* can be adjectives or adverbs: *hablas más/menos que antes* 'you talk more/less than before' (adverbs), but *somos más/menos* 'there are more/fewer of us' (lit. 'we are more/fewer').

(3) Use of *más* or *menos* with these comparative forms, e.g. **más mejor*, is as incorrect as English forms like **'more better', **'less worse'. One says *mucho mejor/peor* 'much better/worse'.

(4) The uses of *mayor* and *menor* are discussed at 6.8 and 6.9.

(5) *Más bueno*, *más malo* are used of moral qualities though *mejor/peor* are more usual. See 6.3.1 note 3.

(6) *No más que* means 'only': *no tengo más dinero que el que ves aquí* 'the only money I've got is what you see here'.

(7) *Más bien* means 'rather' or 'more than anything' in sentences like *esto más bien favorecía al gobierno* 'this rather/more than anything favoured the government'.

6.3 Superlative of adjectives

See 6.4 for the superlative of adverbs. See 39.15.5. for the use of the subjunctive after superlative expressions.

6.3.1 Superlative of adjectives formed with the definite article

In statements of the type 'the nearest station', 'the smallest tree', the superlative of adjectives (but not of adverbs) is formed with *el/la/los/las/lo* plus *más* or *menos*: *él es el más inteligente/el mejor/el menos tímido* 'he's the most intelligent/the best/the least shy':

una infernal espiral de sangre y muertes que nos ha convertido en el país más inseguro y violento del mundo, con la más alta tasa de homicidios (*El Tiempo*, Col.)	an infernal spiral of blood and deaths that has turned us into the most unsafe and violent country in the world, with the highest murder rate
lo mejor/peor que te puede suceder . . . (See Chapter 8 for the uses of *lo*)	the best/worst thing that can happen to you . . .
el mejor restaurante de Madrid (See note 2)	the best restaurant in Madrid

However, in certain cases, listed at 6.3.2, the definite article is not used.

(1) 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.

(2) Sentences like 'the best restaurant in Madrid' usually require *de Madrid*, not *en*. See 38.8.3 note 1 for discussion.

(3) *Más bueno/malo* can be used of moral qualities instead of *mejor/peor*: *a mí no me gusta pegar a los niños . . . pero es que este/éste es el más malo de todos* (EA, Sp., dialogue) 'I don't like hitting children, but this one's the worst of all', *tu papá es el más bueno de todos, más bueno que el mío* (MP, Arg., dialogue) 'your father's the nicest of all, nicer than mine'.

6.3.2 Superlative of adjectives formed without the definite article

The definite article is not used in superlative constructions in the following cases:

(**a**) When a possessive adjective precedes *más* or *menos* (contrast French *mon ami le plus loyal*):

mi más leal amigo/mi amigo más leal	my most loyal friend
Pero mi capa más profunda se entristeció (ES, Arg.)	But the deepest layer in me (lit. 'my deepest layer') was saddened

(**b**) After *ponerse* and other verbs of becoming, including *quedar*(*se*):

María se pone más nerviosa	Maria gets most nervous
Queda mejor así	It's best/better like that

Such sentences could also be understood as comparatives. The superlative meaning can be made clear by using *ser* + *el que* or *quien*: *María es la que/quien se pone más nerviosa*, *este/éste es el que queda mejor*.

(c) When the superlative does not involve comparison with another noun (this includes cases in which something is compared with itself):

El idealismo siempre es más fácil cuando uno es joven	Idealism is always easiest (or 'easier') when one's young
Los domingos es cuando la lluvia es más deprimente	It's on Sundays that the rain is most depressing
Aquí es donde el Rin es más romántico	This is where the river Rhine is at its most romantic (the Rhine compared with itself)
No recuerdo cuándo fui más feliz	I don't remember when I was happiest

Compare the following where true comparison with another noun is involved: *el amor sin celos es el más noble* (compared with other loves) 'love without jealousy is the noblest', *las pizzas con anchoas son las mejores* 'pizzas with anchovies are (the) best'.

(**e**) In the construction *qué . . . más* 'what a . . .!':

Qué hombre más cabeza dura . . . (MP, Arg., dialogue)	What an obstinate man . . .
¡Qué respuesta más cínica!	What a cynical answer!

6.4 Superlative of adverbs (including *más* and *menos*)

The definite article cannot be used to form the superlative of an adverb (including *más* and *menos* used as adverbs). Students of French must remember not to use the article: compare *c'est Richard qui danse le mieux* and *Ricardo es quien mejor baila*. Examples:

Cuando más rápido habla es cuando está nervioso	It's when he's nervous that he talks fastest
Era el cuento que mejor nos permitía pelear (ABE, Pe.)	It was the short story that allowed us to quarrel most (lit. 'best'; i.e. 'short stories provoked our greatest quarrels')
. . . el ser que más lo amaba y al que más amaba (GGM, Col.)	. . . the person who loved him most and whom he loved most
El patrón fue uno de los que más peces capturó (*Granma*, Cu.)	The skipper was one of those who caught most fish

(1) 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. Note that with the verb *gustar*, *más* must be used, not *mejor*; contrast English 'I like this one best/most'.

6.5 *Más/menos que* or *más/menos de*?

Important: *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 three thirty
Estaba seguro de que no aguantarías quieta durante más de seis meses (AM, Mex., 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	This restaurant is dearer than before
Cansa más el viaje que el empleo	The commuting is more tiring than the job

Le escriben de Italia más que a nosotros (MP, Arg., dialogue)	They write to him from Italy more than they do to us

(1) *No más de* 'not more than' must not be confused with *no . . . más que . . .* meaning 'only'. Contrast *Juan no compró más de veinte libros* 'Juan bought twenty books' or 'fewer/not more than twenty' and *Juan no compró más que veinte libros* 'Juan bought only twenty books'. Also *no he pasado en Marbella más que unos días* (SP, Sp., dialogue) 'I've only spent a couple of days in Marbella', *las clases de pintura no eran más que una manera más entretenida de pasar el tiempo* (GGM, Col.) 'the art classes were only a more entertaining way of killing time'.

(2) In the following examples *que* must be used, even though a number follows: *tiene más fuerzas que tres hombres juntos* '(s)he's stronger than three men together', *habló más que las otras cinco personas* '(s)he talked more than the other five people'. Here the comparison is not with the numbers but with the *strength of* three men, *the talking* done by five people. Spanish thus avoids an ambiguity that affects English: compare *comió más que tres personas* '(s)he ate more than three people (would eat)' and *comió* (*a*) *más de tres personas* '(s)he ate more than three people' (cannibalism).

6.6 When to use *más/menos del/de la/de los/de las que* and *más/menos de lo que*

Important: the following sentence can be translated in two ways: 'the bookshop sells more books in September than (it sells) in February':

(**a**) *la librería vende más/menos libros en septiembre que en febrero*
(**b**) *la librería vende más libros en septiembre* ***de los que*** *vende en febrero*

Just as in English 'it sells' can be dropped so sentence (**b**) could be replaced by sentence (**a**).

However, this short cut is not possible in Spanish if the second verb is a different word, and often impossible if the verb is repeated but is in a different tense. In such cases, a special construction is obligatory in Spanish, but not in English:

(**c**) *La librería vende más libros en septiembre* ***de los que compra*** *en febrero*
The bookshop sells more books in September than it buys in February
(**d**) *La librería ha vendido más libros* ***de los que vendió*** *el año pasado*
The bookshop has sold more books than it sold last year

English-speakers constantly produce incorrect translations of sentences like (**c**) and (**d**), e.g. *. . . *vende más libros en septiembre* ***que compra en febrero* 'sells more in September than it buys in February' or **has traído más harina* ***que necesitamos*' for the correct *has traído más harina* ***de la que*** *necesitamos* 'you've brought more flour than we need'. The rule is:

(**a**) If a comparison is made with a clause which contains a **gendered** direct object ***del que*** must be used and it must agree in number and gender with the noun or pronoun it refers to:

Tiene más zapatos de los que tiene su madre (could be shortened to *tiene más zapatos que su madre* but the rest of these examples require a form of *del que*)	(S)he's got more shoes than her/his mother has
La conozco desde hace aún más años ***de los que*** *lleva fuera de España* (JM, Sp., dialogue)	I've known her for even more years than she has been out of Spain
. . . más novedades ***de las que*** *Diego hubiera podido imaginar* (AM, Mex.)	. . . more novelties than Diego could have imagined

Tienen mejores posibilidades ***de las que*** *yo podría tener jamás* (EP, Mex. dialogue)	They have better opportunities than I could ever have
. . . al frente de trescientos hombres armados — muchos más ***de los que*** *ha mandado nunca . . .* (MVLl, Pe.)	. . . at the head of 300 armed men – many more than he has led before
. . . más dinero ***del que*** *harías en el resto de tu vida en Miami o donde sea* (CP, Arg.)	. . . more money than you'd make in the rest of your life in Miami or anywhere else

(**b**) If the comparison is made with a **genderless** word or phrase, e.g. a verb phrase, the invariable phrase ***de lo que*** must be used:

Es menos tonto ***de lo que*** *crees* (*crees* is genderless)	He's less stupid than you think
Nos lo explicarán mejor ***de lo que*** *se lo explicaron a ellos* (*se lo explicaron* is genderless)	They will explain it to us better than they explained it to them
El viento me vuelve mucho más loca ***de lo que*** *mi marido y exmaridos dicen que estoy* (CRG, Sp. '*Dicen que estoy*' is genderless)	The wind drives me much crazier than my husband and ex-husbands say I am
No estás ni la mitad de moreno ***de lo que*** *está Celia* (genderless phrase *está Celia*)	You're not half as brown/tanned as Celia is
No me lo agradezcas más ***de lo que*** *merezco* (LS, Sp., dialogue. Genderless *merezco*)	Don't thank me for it more than I deserve
Así que . . . debía de ser aún más rico ***de lo que*** *me imaginaba* (JM, Sp., dialogue)	So he must have been even richer than I'd imagined
Convertirse en inversionista es más fácil ***de lo que*** *crees* (*Excélsior*, Mex.)	Becoming an investor is easier than you think

(1) Popular English also uses a similar construction in comparisons: ?'she's smarter than *what* you think', ?'you've brought more than *what* we need' for the standard '. . . than you think', 'than we need'.

(2) The use of *del que* or *de lo que* seems unnecessary to English-speakers, but Spanish needs it because *más/menos de* can only precede noun phrases, and also because *más que* before a verb or adjective usually means 'rather than' or 'instead of': *gasta más que gana* '(s)he spends more (i.e. 'rather') than earns', i.e. (s)he isn't an earner but a spender. Compare *gasta más de lo que gana* '(s)he spends more (money) than (s)he earns'.

(3) *Que* alone was sometimes used in these sentences in good writers in the past, cf. Unamuno (Sp., writing before 1920), *porque España ha tenido un proceso mucho más homogéneo que se cree* 'because Spain has had a much more homogeneous process than is believed'; nowadays *. . . de lo que se cree*.

(4) 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'.

6.7 *Más* as a colloquial intensifier

Más is often used as an intensifier without a comparative meaning in familiar speech on both continents, e.g. *está más borracho . . .* 'is he *drunk*!' See 35.4.4.

For the standard construction *qué vida más triste* 'what a sad life!', *¡qué hombre más guapo!* 'what an attractive man!', see 6.3.2e.

6.8 Uses of *mayor*

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 and insects, etc., and its use for physical comparisons is more characteristic of written language:

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
¡Sácale el mayor partido a tu PC!	Get the most out of your personal computer!

(1) One cannot 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	My brother is older than yours
mi hermano mayor	My elder brother
Es ya mayor que su hermana mayor . . .	She's already older than her elder sister
en realidad mayor de lo que fue nunca Teresa (JM, Sp., dialogue)	. . . actually older than Teresa ever was
Era cuatro años mayor que Daniel (AM, Mex.)	He was four years older than Daniel

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 sizes, intensity, frequency, power or quantity, *mayor* or *más* can be used, with *mayor* considered more elegant: *mayor/más anchura* 'greater width', *mayor/más intensidad*, *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, cuanta mayor cantidad lleve (cookery book, Sp.)	The greater the quantity it contains, the more pronounced the garlic flavour will be
A mayor servicio prestado, mayor dignidad (*El Diario de Hoy*, ES)	The greater the service done, the greater the dignity
Deseo recibir mayor información	I would like to receive more information

In all the examples under (**d**) *más* is possible and much more usual in relaxed styles.

(**e**) Before *número* or words and phrases indicating number, *mayor* is obligatory: *en el mayor número de casos* 'in a greater number of cases', *mayor índice de mortalidad infantil* 'a higher rate of infant mortality', *mayor incidencia de accidentes de tráfico* 'a higher rate of traffic accidents', *la mayor parte de las víctimas* 'the majority of the victims'. Note the agreement of *mucho* in *mucha mayor velocidad* 'much greater speed'. See 10.12. note 1.

(**f**) Set phrases: *mayor de edad* 'of age', *hacerse mayor* 'to get old', *ganado mayor* 'livestock' (horses, cows, mules only), *calle mayor* 'high street'.

(**g**) *Más grande* can be used as a superlative: *el más grande/el mayor pensador moderno* 'the greatest modern thinker', but not in pejorative statements: *el mayor granuja del país* 'the biggest rogue in the country' (not *el más grande*).

6.9 Uses of *menor*

Menor, unlike *mayor*, is not used for physical size: *esta habitación es más pequeña que esa/ésa*, not **menor que esa/ésa*; *ella es más pequeña de tamaño/más baja* 'she's smaller in size', not **menor de tamaño*. However, it can be used for dimensions 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* 'the youngest in the family', not **el menor 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 (CRG, Sp.)	Diego is three years younger than Martita and four years younger than Sergio
Virginia era unos meses menor que yo (AM, Mex., dialogue)	Virginia was a few months younger than me
Usted no tendrá la menor dificultad (or *mínima* or *más pequeña*)	You won't have the slightest difficulty
El riesgo de un enfrentamiento es cada vez menor	The risk of a confrontation is declining

(1) Common set phrases: *menor de edad* 'under age', *apto para menores* 'suitable for minors/young people', *menores de 18 años* 'under 18 years old'.

6.10 *Mucho más, mucho menos, poco más*, etc.

Important: before *más*, *menos*, *mayor* and *menor*, when these four words qualify a noun, *mucho* and *poco* are adjectives and must agree in number and gender with the following noun – a point that English-speakers tend to forget: *tienen muchos menos hijos que tú* 'they have far fewer children than you'. See 10.12 note 1 for a discussion.

6.11 'The more . . . the more . . .'/'the less . . . the less . . .'

Cuanto más . . . más . . ., *cuanto menos . . . menos . . .* are the standard formulas on both continents (no accent on *cuanto*):

cuantas más fotos, mejor	the more photos the better
cuantos más chicos vengan, mejor	the more boys who come the better
Cuanto mayor sea la distancia de una galaxia a la Tierra, más deprisa se aleja (*Abc*, Sp. For *deprisa/de prisa* see 35.3.1)	The greater the distance of a galaxy from the Earth, the faster it recedes
Cuanto más pensaba más me afligía (JC, Arg., dialogue)	The more I thought, the more upset I got

(1) Use of *mientras* in this construction is less frequent in Spain but is very common in Latin America. *Contra* is heard in popular speech in many places including Spain but it is stigmatized. *Entre más/menos* is considered correct in Mexico and Central America but is stigmatized elsewhere:

Mientras más pienses en ella, más tuya la harás (CF, Mex., dialogue)	The more you think of her, the more you will make her yours
. . . la cabeza gacha, entre menos me vea, mejor (EP, Mex., dialogue)	. . . with my head bowed, the less he sees of me the better
?*Aquí, contra menos somos, peor avenidos estamos* (MD, Sp., rural speech)	Here, the fewer of us there are the worse we get on

(2) The *NGLE* 205j notes but does not recommend a popular tendency in Latin America to make *cuanto* invariable in phrases like ?*cuanto más fotos mejor*, for *cuantas más . . .*

(3) '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 . . .* (JM, Sp.) 'it's not so much that there are no secrets between two people because they decide that it should be that way, but that it's not possible to avoid telling'.

6.12 'More and more . . .', 'less and less . . .'

Cada vez más/menos are the usual Spanish equivalents:

Está cada vez más delgado	He's getting thinner and thinner
Yo vengo cada dos o tres años y cada vez está peor (JPG, Cu., dial.)	I come [to Cuba] every two or three years and it gets worse and worse

6.13 Superlative time expressions

A neuter construction with *lo* may be required:

Lo más tarde que cenamos es a las ocho	We have dinner/supper at eight at the latest
Lo antes/Lo más temprano que puedo salir de casa es a la una . . .	The earliest I can leave home is at one . . .
La boda tenía que ser lo más pronto posible (ES, Mex., dial)	The wedding had to be as soon as possible

6.14 Miscellaneous translations of English comparatives and superlatives

Todos le interesaban, el párroco no el que menos	All the men interested her/him, not least the parish priest
Ninguno trabaja mucho, y tú menos que todos	None of them works much, and you least of all
lo menos que podrías hacer . . .	the least you could do . . .
Estoy agradecidísimo/muy agradecido	I'm most/extremely grateful
De los dos, este libro es el que más se lee	Of the two, this book is read more/the most
En esas circunstancias la gastronomía es lo de menos (MVM, Sp.)	In those circumstances gastronomy is the least important part of it

Dale cuanto dinero puedas/Dale todo el dinero que puedas	Give him/her as much money as you can
la mejor solución posible	the best possible solution
el segundo mejor/peor	the second best/worst
la segunda mujer más guapa del mundo	the second most attractive woman in the world
Sabe sacar el mejor partido de todo	(S)he knows how to make the most of everything
Tan duquesa es como mi padre	She's as much a duchess as I am . . . (ironic; lit. 'she's as much a duchess as my father')

6.15 Comparisons of equality

6.15.1 *Tan como, tanto como*

The formula is *tan . . . como* or *tanto . . . como* 'as . . . as', not *tanto . . . que* which means 'so much that', as in *rio/se rio tanto que por poco revienta* '(s)he laughed so much (s)he nearly burst'. *Tan* is used before adjectives, adverbs and nouns used as adjectives; *tanto* is used before *como* itself, before nouns and when nothing follows:

No soy tan joven como tú	I'm not as young as you
Usted lo sabe tan bien como yo (MVLl, Pe., dialogue)	You know as well as I do
No eres tan hombre como él	You're not as much of a man as he is
No hablo tanto como tú	I don't talk as much as you
Tanto los chicos como las chicas	Both boys and girls

(1) *Tanto como* can also indicate contrasting equality: *trabaja tanto para divertirse como para ganar dinero* '(s)he works as much for amusement as to earn money'. *Tanto . . . cuanto* can be used instead in literary styles. This construction is not used when there is no implied contrast: *Manuel y Teresa trabajan en informática* 'M. and T. work in computing', not *tanto M. como T . . .*

6.15.2 *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 6.15.3):

Escribe igual que/lo mismo que tú (not **igual como*, **lo mismo como*)	(S)he writes the same way as you
Me trató igual que siempre (GGM, Col.)	She treated me the same as always

(1) 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* '(s)he argued in the same way as many philosophers of the day'.

(2) *Diferente*, *distintos*: *es diferente del que tú tienes* 'it's different to/from the one you have', *esta silla es diferente de la otra* 'this chair's different to/from the other', *es diferente/distinto a ti* 'he's different to/from you'. The construction *diferente a* is found in Latin America and is heard in Spain, although Seco (1998), 164, says it is uncommon in educated usage in European Spanish. *Diverso* takes *de* in Spain, either *de* or *a* in Latin America.

(3) Note the following translations of 'exactly/just as . . .' *lo hice tal como me lo dijiste/lo hice exactamente como me lo dijiste* 'I did it just as you told me to/exactly as you told me'.

6.15.3 *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'. Compare *otros problemas igualmente difíciles* 'other equally difficult problems' and *una bata que le caía igual que hecha a medida* (LG, Sp.) 'a housecoat that fitted her exactly as if made to measure'. Further examples:

Cuando te conozcan sabrán apreciarte igual que yo (LO, Cu., dialogue)	When they get to know you they'll value you the same way as I do
Eres igual a tu padre (ES, Mex., dialogue)	You're just like your father
Es igual que tú (also *igual a ti*)/*Es lo mismo que tú*	(S)he's the same as you
Tú eres igualmente delgado/Tú eres igual de delgado	You're just as slim
Lo hace igual de bien que tú	(S)he does it as well as you

(1) Latin-American colloquial, but not formal styles, tend to make the adverb *igual* agree in number: *son iguales de grandes* for *son igual de grandes* 'they're equally large'.

(2) In Spain, *igual* may be used colloquially to mean 'maybe' (i.e. the same as *quizá*, *tal vez* or *a lo mejor*). See 20.2.4.

6.15.4 *Como para . . .*

Como para (or simply *para*) is used after *bastante* and *lo suficiente*, as in *eBay ha vendido suficientes automóviles como para rodear la luna más de cuatro veces* (*Excélsior*, Mex.) 'eBay has sold enough cars to go round the Moon more than four times'.

7 Demonstrative adjectives and pronouns

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- Forms of the demonstratives (Section 7.1)
- The position of demonstrative adjectives (Section 7.2)
- When should one write demonstrative with an accent? (Section 7.3)
- The difference between *este/ese/aquel* and *éste/ése/aquél* (Section 7.4)
- Uses of *aquel* (Section 7.4.2)
- Translating 'the former' and 'the latter' (Section 7.4.3)
- Some translation problems involving demonstratives (Section 7.5)

Demonstrative adjectives and pronouns are those that mean 'this', 'that', these', 'those'.

Spanish differs from French, German and English in having two words for 'that', *ese* and *aquel*, depending on the distance in time or space between the speaker and the thing referred to. The demonstratives have neuter forms, *esto*, *eso* and *aquello*, which are discussed separately in Chapter 8, though it is worth repeating here that these should not be used to refer to people: *este/éste es mi nuevo profesor*, not **esto es mi nuevo profesor* 'this is my new teacher'.

7.1 Forms of demonstrative adjectives and pronouns

	this	**that (near)**	**that (far)**
masculine	*este*	*ese*	*aquel*
feminine	*esta*	*esa*	*aquella*
neuter	*esto*	*eso*	*aquello*
	these	**those (near)**	**those (far)**
masculine	*estos*	*esos*	*aquellos*
feminine	*estas*	*esas*	*aquellas*

(1) See 7.3 for when to write these with an accent.

(2) **Important**: the masculine singular forms do not end in *-o*!

(3) *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' (see 3.1.2 for a list of these nouns). This is the practice of well-edited texts everywhere, but forms like *este arma* 'this weapon', *este área* 'this area' are very common in spontaneous speech and quite often appear in informal writing.

(4) In Latin America *este* is used and abused like the English 'er . . .' to fill pauses while the speaker is thinking.

(5) 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).

7.2 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 is familiar. This may imply sarcasm and the construction should be used cautiously. Compare *esa mujer* 'that woman' (neutral tone) and *la mujer esa* 'that woman . . .' (sarcastic or insinuating). Nevertheless, the construction may simply indicate a reference to something well-known, as in *¿quiere la bata esta? Se va a enfriar* (CMG, Sp., dialogue) 'do you want this dressing gown/US bathrobe? You'll get cold'. Further examples:

Pero con la agencia esa que ha montado, se está forrando el riñón (ABV, Sp., dialogue)	But with that agency he's set up, he's simply raking it in
El tipo ese anda ya muy cerca de nuestra pista (GZ, Mex., dialogue)	That guy's already hot on our trail
Me voy de aquí, no resisto el frío este (interview, *Granma*, Cu.)	I'm leaving. I can't stand this cold (i.e. New York's)
. . . desde la tarde aquella en que me ayudaron a llenar los formularios de ingreso a la seguridad social (ABE, Pe., Sp. ***re****llenar un formulario*)	. . . after that afternoon when they helped me fill in my Social Security application forms

(1) Important: *el/la/los/las* are obligatory when a demonstrative adjective follows the noun: ***la*** *gente aquella*.

(2) The demonstrative after a noun remains an adjective, so it is not written with an accent: never **la gente aquélla*. In apposition (see Glossary), a following demonstrative is a pronoun: *su novia tosía mucho, síntoma este/éste que le preocupaba intensamente* 'his girlfriend was coughing a lot, this being a symptom that worried him intensely', so traditionalists would use an accent. See the next section for the optional accent on *éste*.

7.3 When should one write *éste, ése, aquél*?

Our recommendation is *never*. This has been the advice of the Academy since 1959, reaffirmed in 2010, and it is supported by most well-known Hispanic grammarians, including Seco.

But many reputable publishers, including *El País*, and millions of ordinary citizens still refuse to accept this time-saving rule and continue to distinguish the adjectives from the pronouns by always writing the latter with an accent: *un libro como éste/ése/aquél* 'a book like this one/that one', *prefiero éstas a aquéllas* 'I prefer these ones (fem.) to those ones'.

In this book, we show both possibilities, e.g. *un libro como ese/ése* 'a book like that one', but we strongly urge students to omit the accent, since misusing it on a demonstrative adjective and writing **éste libro* for *este libro* looks illiterate.

(1) There is an inconsistency in the traditional system. It has always been the practice, even among 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. (See Glossary for the terminology); the reason for this is not entirely clear. So one writes *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.

(2) Omitting the accent can theoretically cause ambiguities like *esta compra* 'this purchase' and *ésta compra* 'this woman is buying', but in practice such clashes are rare enough to be ignored or are clarified by context.

(3) Traditionalists should recall that other languages do not need to differentiate demonstrative adjectives and pronouns: cf. Italian *questo libro* 'this book', *un libro come questo* 'a book like this', Spanish traditional spelling *este libro/un libro como éste.*

7.4 Uses of *este, ese* and *aquel*

7.4.1 Uses of the demonstrative adjectives/pronouns

(**a**) *Este/esta/estos/estas* 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)', *estas circunstancias* 'these circumstances (that have just arisen/that we are talking about here)'.

(**b**) As far as physical distance is concerned, *ese/esa/esos/esas* means 'that': *ese libro* 'that book', *esos árboles* 'those trees'. It can refer to objects at any distance from the speaker and can therefore in practice always replace *aquel* when space rather than time is involved. But *aquel* cannot always replace *ese* since *aquel* is not used for things close to the hearer or speaker.

(**c**) *Aquel/aquella/aquellos/aquellas* resembles the old English 'yonder' or the modern 'that/those **over there**'. Spatially it suggests distance and it is rarely obligatory. It is discussed in detail at 7.4.2.

este/éste de aquí	this one here
ese/ése de ahí	that one just there
aquel/aquél de allí (see 35.6.1 for the difference between *ahí* and *allí*).	that one over there
no ese/ése sino aquel/aquél	not that one, but that one over there
Alcánzame ese/aquel libro rojo	Pass me that red book
Prefiero ese que tú tienes	I prefer that one (masc.) that you have
En aquel tiempo era un acontecimiento cumplir los quince, de veras entraba una en sociedad (ES, Mex., dialogue)	In those days your fifteenth birthday was an event, you were really entering society
¿Cómo se llama aquella/esa estrella?	what's that star (up there) called?
¿Quién se acuerda ya de aquellas tardes sin televisión?	who can still remember those evenings without television?

7.4.2 *Aquel* or *ese*?

Aquel seems to be dying out when it refers to distance in space rather than time: some grammarians complain about a tendency to use *ese* where *aquel* is more elegant. For this reason, learners, when in doubt, should probably translate 'that' as *ese* as it is almost always correct. *Aquel* is used:

(**a**) **When distances in space are compared**, *aquel* implies the more distant item, and it is usual:

—¿Quién plantó ese árbol?	'Who planted that tree?'
—¿Ese/Ése? —No, aquel/aquél	'That one?' 'No, the one behind'
No esa torre sino aquella/aquélla	Not that tower but the one further away

Even in these cases *ese*, perhaps reinforced by some phrase like *ese/ése de detrás* or *ese de más allá*, could have been used.

(**b**) **When only one item is involved,** it is optionally but usually used to indicate something at some distance from the speaker. The difference between *ese libro* and *aquel libro* is about the same as between 'that book' and 'that book over there':

Tráeme aquella/esa taza	Bring me that cup (from over there)
¿Ve a aquel hombre que está tragando ron? (EM, Mex. dial. Or *ese*)	Do you see that man (over) there swallowing rum?

(**c**) **As far as time is concerned**, *aquel* indicates the past and it is much used for distant memories. *En aquella época* 'at that time' seems more distant than *en esa época.* Once an event in the past has been mentioned, *ese* can be used in subsequent references to it:

Debe de haber andado ya por los sesenta años cuando se embarcó con aquel horror de mujer (SP, Mex., dialogue; *ese* would imply that he is still with her)	He must have been getting on for sixty when he fell in with (lit. 'set sail with') that frightful woman
Quise llorar aquella noche pero no pude (CSG, Mex., dialogue)	I wanted to weep that night but I couldn't
. . . aquellas estrellas como un hielo hecho añicos (LG, Sp. *Aquellas* for a childhood memory)	. . . those stars like shattered ice
¡qué noche aquella/aquélla!	What a night that was!
¡qué tiempos aquellos/aquéllos! (not *esos/ésos*)	Those were the days!

(1) *Aquel* cannot be used for the future: *ese lejano día* can mean 'that distant day yet to come'. *Aquel lejano día* refers to the past.

(2) *Aquel que* (no written accent) is used and not *el que* when a preposition plus a relative pronoun follows (as in 'the one in which . . .' *aquel/aquella en el que/la que*, not **el/la en el/la que*). See 7.5c and 39.13 for discussion.

(3) *Aquel* should not be used with a historic present since it is absurd to stress both the remoteness and the closeness of an action: not **en aquel año Cervantes escribe el Quijote* 'in that year Cervantes wrote *Don Quixote*' but either *en ese año Cervantes escribe el Quijote*, or *en aquel año Cervantes escribió el Quijote*.

(4) For the neuter pronoun *aquello* see 8.5.

7.4.3 'The former, the latter'

Since *aquel/aquél* denotes something remote and *este/éste* something close, they conveniently translate 'former' and 'latter':

Existían dos partidos, el conservador y el liberal, este/éste anticlerical y aquel/aquél partidario de la Iglesia	There were two parties, the conservatives and the liberals, the latter anticlerical and the former a supporter of the Church

(1) *Este/éste* is much used in writing on its own for 'the latter': *uno de los guardaespaldas se inclinó hacia el inválido, y este/éste dirigía el brillo de sus gafas oscuras hacia Ornella* (LS, Ch.) 'one of the

bodyguards leaned over to the invalid, and the latter directed the glint of his sunglasses towards Ornella'.

7.5 Translation problems involving demonstratives

(**a**) 'The . . . which/who', 'those . . . who', etc.

El que or *quien* are the usual equivalents. *Aquel que* (no accent) is used in formal language: *que se ponga de pie la que* (or *aquella que*) *ha dicho eso* 'stand up the girl who said that', etc. See Chapter 40 (Nominalizers) for discussion.

(**b**) 'Those of them', 'those of you', etc. *Aquellos de* is frowned on, except perhaps before *ustedes* or *vosotros*:

Los que aplaudieron ayer	Those of them who applauded yesterday
Los nicaragüenses que sabemos la verdad	those of us Nicaraguans who know the truth
Aquellos de (*entre*) *ustedes que afirmen eso*	those of you who claim that
Los que no hayan firmado el formulario (**los de ellos* or **aquellos de ellos* in this context are not Spanish)	those (of them/you) who haven't signed the form

(**c**) 'The one in which', 'those where', etc.

Aquel que, written without an accent, is a literary alternative for *el que* when a preposition comes before a relative pronoun. 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'. Spoken language usually repeats the noun: *la habitación era más cómoda que la habitación en la que/donde había dormido antes*; **en la en* (*la*) *que* is not possible. See also 39.13.

(**d**) 'This/that is why . . .', 'this/that is where', 'this/that's who', 'this/that was when', etc. Translating 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 . . .*) 'that's why he paid too much'. See 41.3 for a discussion. A simpler solution is *por eso pagó demasiado . . .*

8 Neuter article and neuter pronouns

This chapter discusses:

- *lo bueno*, *lo más rápido posible* (Section 8.2.1)
- *lo inteligentes que son . . .* (Section 8.2.2)
- *ello* (Section 8.3)
- Neuter *lo* as in *no lo sé* (Section 8.4)
- *vérselas*, *arreglárselas*, etc. (Section 8.4.4)
- *esto*, *eso*, *aquello* (Section 8.5)

8.1 Neuter gender: general

Spanish nouns are either masculine or feminine, but a few pronouns and an article have neuter as well as masculine and feminine gender and they are important in the modern language.

Neuter gender is considered necessary in Spanish to refer to concepts, ideas or statements (e.g. a preceding remark or a sentence) which have no grammatical gender. Masculine and feminine articles and pronouns can refer only to nouns or pronouns, present or implied, and nouns and pronouns other than neuter pronouns must be either masculine or feminine. Examples should make this clear:

No quiero hablar de aquel/aquél/aquella/ aquélla (for the optional accent on these pronouns see 7.3)	I don't want to talk about that one (i.e. some masculine or feminine noun. French *celui-là/celle-là*)
No quiero hablar de aquello	I don't want to talk about **that** (Fr. *cela*)
No me gusta ese/ése/esa/ésa	I don't like that one (Fr. *celui-là/celle-là*)
No me gusta eso	I don't like that (Fr. *cela*)
los nuevos/las nuevas	the new ones (masc.)/the new ones (fem.)
lo nuevo	what is new

For *lo que*, *lo cual* as relative pronouns (meaning 'which . . .'), see 39.6. For *lo que* and *lo de* as nominalizers (i.e. 'the thing that/of . . .'), see 40.1.5 and 40.1.3. For the humorous *la que . . .* for *lo que . . .* see 40.1.4. For the colloquial *la de* meaning 'the quantity of . . .' see 3.2.30. For the neuter pronouns *todo* 'everything', *algo* 'something', *mucho* 'a lot' and *poco* 'a little' see Chapter 10.

8.2 The 'neuter article' *lo*

8.2.1 *Lo* with masculine singular adjectives and participles and adverbs

(**a**) With adjectives and participles:

Lo followed by a masculine singular adjective or pronoun, or *lo de . . . plus* a noun or adverb, may become a sort of abstract noun. This is often an equivalent of an English adjective + 'thing', but the translation may require some thought:

Lo importante es que digan la verdad	The important thing is that they tell the truth
Lo bueno de tu casa es que tiene mucha luz	The good thing about your house is that it's full of light
Para lo único que encontraba tiempo era para los tres caballos (EP, Mex.)	The only thing he found time for was the three horses
Intenta olvidar lo sucedido	Try to forget what happened
en busca de lo más parecido a un local comercial (CP, Arg.)	in search of something most closely resembling commercial premises
lo ya dicho en el capítulo anterior	what was said in the previous chapter
lo nunca visto en Estados Unidos	what has never been seen before in the USA
desde lo alto de la escala de Jacob (AO, Mex.)	from the top of Jacob's ladder
Papá se ha enterado de lo nuestro	Father has found out about us
Lo mío ha sido igual de duro que lo de ustedes (GGM, Col., dialogue)	What happened to me was as tough as what happened to you
Felicitas había estudiado lo justo (SP, Sp.)	Felicitas had studied just as much as was necessary
Baja lo de allí arriba	Take down the things from up there
Ya te contaré lo de mi amiga Josefina	I'll tell you later about (what happened to) my friend Josefina

(**b**) With adverbs or adverbial phrases:

Combinations of *lo* + *más/menos* + an adverb + some phrase meaning 'as possible' are particularly common and useful:

Cuélgalo lo más arriba que puedas	Hang it as high/as far up as you can
lo más atrás posible	as far back as possible
lo antes posible . . .	as soon as possible . . .
Lo antes que puedo salir de casa es a las seis	The earliest I can leave home is six o'clock
Siempre hacen lo menos posible	They always do the minimum

(1) *En/a lo de Antonio* means 'in/to Antonio's house' (*en/a casa de . . .*) in Argentina.

(2) In sentences with *ser* and a few other verbs, the verb agrees with the predicate: *lo mejor de la película* ***son*** *los actores* (not *. . . es los actores*) 'the best thing in the film is (lit. 'are') the actors': see 2.3.3.

(3) Other Romance languages lack this useful distinction between gendered and neuter adjectives. In French *le plus tragique* can mean both 'the most tragic thing' and 'the most tragic one (masc.)'. The Italian *il bello e il brutto* can mean 'beauty and ugliness' (*lo bello y lo feo*) or 'the beautiful one (masc.) and the ugly one' (*el bello y el feo*).

(4) For the choice between the indicative and the subjunctive in constructions with *lo* + adjective + *es que*, e.g. *lo increíble/lo curioso es que . . .*, see 20.3.14.

(5) *Lo* is sometimes found with a noun used adjectivally: *pues sí, Diego, ya sabes lo desastre que soy* (CMG, Sp., dialogue) 'well yes, Diego, you know what a disaster I am', *ya te salió lo mujer* (AM, Mex., dialogue) 'here comes the woman in you' (lit. 'the woman in you came out'), *uno de mis tíos dio un discurso sobre lo buen hermano que fue mi padre* (DES, Mex.) 'one of my uncles made a speech about what a good brother my father was'.

(6) When *bastante* and *suficiente* occur in phrases like 'clever enough to . . .', 'she did it well enough to . . .' they are preceded by *lo* and followed by *para*: *el cuello de su gabardina estaba lo bastante abierto para permitirme contemplar el collar de perlas* (JM, Sp.) 'the collar of her raincoat was open enough to

let me see her pearl necklace', *ya tenía lo suficiente para aquellos paseos* (SG, Mex.) 'he already had enough (money) for those excursions'. *Como* may optionally precede the *para*, especially when an infinitive follows: *era lo suficientemente ingenua como para tragarse cualquier cuento* (LS, Ch.) 'she was naive enough to swallow any story'.

8.2.2 *Lo* plus adjectives or adverbs translating 'how', etc.

Lo with an adjective or adverb often translates the English 'how' or some similar word plus an adjective or adverb. In this case the adjective must agree with the noun. The construction often occurs after verbs of perception ('see', 'realize', 'understand', 'know') and after verbs of liking or disliking:

(**a**) with adjectives:

¿No se ha fijado en lo delgada que se ha quedado? (ABV, Sp., dialogue)	Haven't you noticed how thin she's become?
Lo que resulta increíble es lo modernos y antiguos que son al mismo tiempo (ABE, Pe)	What's incredible is how modern and ancient they are at the same time
Ya se sabe lo curiosos que somos los periodistas (JV, Mex., dial.)	People know how curious we journalists are

(**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 (advertisement, Sp.)	Get them talking about you because you speak English so well
Si vieras lo mal que patina	If you could see how badly (s)he skates
Hay que ver lo tarde que es	I can't believe how late it is (lit. 'you have to see how late it is')

(1) A common colloquial construction is *con lo* + adjective. Translation varies with context: *¿con lo caro que está todo qué me voy a andar comprando un reloj?* (EM, Mex., dialogue. Spain probably *¿con lo caro que está todo me iba yo a comprar un reloj?*) 'with everything costing so much am I going to be buying a watch?', *tú, con lo inteligente que eres, a ver si lo puedes abrir* 'you're so intelligent, let's see if you can open it', *. . . con lo metomentodo que es* '. . . since (s)he's such a nosy-parker'.

(2) *De lo más* + an adjective is 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* (MVLl, Pe., dialogue) 'they were drinking their beer really quietly', *hice un pudín de pan. Mi marido me dijo que estaba de lo más bueno* (AA, Cu., dialogue) 'I made a bread pudding. My husband said it was really delicious'.

The adjective may remain in the masculine singular form in this construction, e.g. *Lucía viene de lo más arreglado* 'Lucy's coming all dressed up', *las chicas vienen de lo más arreglado* 'the girls are coming all dressed up', *estos dos son de lo más diplomático* (MS, Mex., dialogue) 'these two are *so* diplomatic'.

(3) In expressions of cause *por* or *de* can be used before *lo* + adjective: *no pudieron pasar por lo gordos que estaban/. . . de* (*lo*) *gordos que estaban* 'they couldn't get through because they were so fat'.

8.3 *Ello*

This is a neuter third-person pronoun. It is invariable in form and can only be used to translate 'it' when this pronoun does not refer to a 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' (*régimen* is masculine 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 *lo* is its direct object form and *le* its indirect object form: *yo lo sabía* = 'I knew it', never **yo sabía ello*; *¿qué le vamos a hacer?* (indirect object) 'what can we do about it?' (not *. . . *a ello*)

No te preocupes por ello, que no se me olvida (see 37.4.4b for this use of *que*)	Don't worry about it – I haven't forgotten it (or 'I won't forget')
Por ello ya no se fía de nadie	Because of that (s)he doesn't trust anybody any more
Las cosas que no importan no se entienden porque no se pone uno a ello (CMG, Sp.)	Things that don't matter aren't understood because we don't apply our minds to it
Yo era un autómata del trabajo y de la escuela y fuera de ello nada me interesaba (EP, Mex.)	I thought of nothing but work and school (lit. 'I was an automaton of . . .') and apart from that nothing interested me

(1) When it is the subject of a verb it is usually translated 'this' and it clearly refers to the whole of the preceding utterance (*esto* could often be used instead).

Habitó un siglo en la Ciudad de los Inmortales. Cuando la derribaron, aconsejó la fundación de otra. Ello no debe sorprendernos . . . (JLB, Arg.)	He dwelt for a century in the City of the Immortals. When they demolished it he recommended the foundation of another. This should not surprise us . . .

(2) Important: if *ello* is omitted in such sentences, the following verb will take a nearby gendered noun or pronoun as its subject and the meaning may change: *el director dijo que no vamos excedidos con el presupuesto, pero ello no permite que podamos ser extravagantes* 'the director said that we're not over-budget, but **this fact** does not allow us to be extravagant'. . . . *pero no permite que seamos extravagantes* would mean '. . . but **he** doesn't allow us to be extravagant'.

8.4 *Lo* as a neuter pronoun

8.4.1 General uses

As was stated in the preceding section, *lo* is the direct object pronoun corresponding to *ello* (but *lo* can also mean 'him' or 'it' referring to masculine nouns; see Chapter 14).

Lo as a neuter pronoun does not refer to a noun, but to an idea, action, situation, clause or sentence:

¿Lo hacemos o no?	Are we going to do it or not?
—¿No sabíais/sabían que estaba prohibido?	'Didn't you know it was forbidden?'
—No, no lo sabíamos	'No, we didn't know (it)'

Soy incapaz de hacer eso porque mi orgullo de trabajadora femenina me lo impide (CMG, Sp.)	I'm incapable of doing that because my pride as a woman worker prevents me
El ministro lo tiene difícil	The minister is in a difficult situation

(1) *Le* is the indirect object form of *lo*: *¿qué le vamos a hacer?* 'what can be done about it?', *no le hace* (Southern Cone) 'it's got nothing to do with it' (Sp. *no tiene* (*nada*) *que ver*).

(2) *Lo* is sometimes used with *todo* to make the latter more specific. Compare *Miguel lo sabe todo* 'Miguel knows it all/all about it' and *Miguel sabe todo* 'Miguel knows everything'.

(3) For Latin-American *se los dije* 'I said it to them', standard Spanish *se lo dije*, see 14.9.2.

8.4.2 'Resumptive' *lo*

Important: *lo* is used to echo or resume the predicate of *ser*, *estar* and *parecer*, the object of transitive verbs and of *haber* 'there is/are'. Spanish does not like to leave these verbs isolated, as English does in a sentence like *¿tolera estar solo, o tolera la necesidad que tenga su cónyuge de estar**lo**?* (quiz on marriage in *Abc*, Sp.) 'can you stand being alone, or can you stand your partner's need to be?'. Compare also *lo hacían sentirse estúpido. Pensó*: *"lo soy". Lo era, demostró serlo* (MVLl, Pe., dialogue) 'they made him feel stupid. He thought "I am." He was. He'd shown that he was'; *. . .era hermosa como yo no lo sería nunca* 'she was beautiful in a way that I would never be' (LP, Mex., dialogue), *puede que tengan sus neuronas en pleno funcionamiento, pero no lo parece* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'maybe their neurones are working flat-out, but it doesn't look that way'.

Exception: this 'resumptive' *lo* is not used when a gerund is dropped after *estar*: *—¿estás escribiendo otra novela? —Sí, estoy/Sí, lo estoy haciendo* (not **lo estoy*) 'are you writing another novel?' 'Yes, I am.'

(1) See 34.2.2 for more about resumptive *lo* with *haber* 'there is/are'.

8.4.3 Colloquial use of *la* for *lo*

La is used in a few colloquial set phrases where one would expect *lo*. This seems to be more frequent in Latin America than in Spain: *la vamos a pasar muy rico* (SG, Mex., dialogue; Sp. *lo vamos a pasar bien*) 'we're going to have a great time', *si los matan la pagarán también ustedes, la pagarán sus familias* (GGM, Col., dialogue; Sp. *lo pagarán*), 'if they kill them you'll pay for it too, your families will pay', *te la estás jugando* 'you're taking a big risk' (Spain also), *se la está pegando con su primo* '(s)he's cheating on him with her/his/your cousin' (Spain also), *te la vas a ganar* 'you're asking for trouble'.

8.4.4 *Vérselas, arreglárselas, habérselas,* etc.

The feminine plural *las* is used idiomatically with a few *se* verbs where we would expect *lo.* Some of these verbs have unexpected meanings. The most common are:

agenciárselas to 'fix' ('something')
*apañárselas** to manage/to cope
arreglárselas to find a way to do something
cantárselas to tell someone a few home truths
dárselas de to fancy oneself as
echárselas de to fancy oneself as
entendérselas con to get to grips with
habérselas con to be faced with
ingeniárselas para to manage things so that
jugárselas to risk everything
prometérselas muy felices to have high hopes
traérselas to be difficult/treacherous
vérselas con to have it out with
*vérselas y deseárselas** to find something difficult

(2) Important: in some sentences the pronoun can refer either to a situation or to a specific noun, in which case the neuter and gendered forms are interchangeable: *no tengo ni talento, ni fuerza. Esa/Ésa es la verdad* (ES, Arg., dialogue; *eso* also possible) 'I have neither talent nor strength. That's the truth'; *esto es una operación militar* (GGM, Col., dialogue. *Esta/ésta es . . .* also possible) 'this is a military operation'. Note also: *¿qué es esto?* 'what's this?', *¿quién es este/éste?* 'who's this (man or boy)?', *este/éste es el problema* 'this is the problem', *esto es un problema* 'this is **a** problem'.

When the subject of the verb is a noun, the pronoun agrees with it: *la verdad es esta/ésta* 'the truth is this', *los problemas son estos/éstos* 'the problems are these'.

(3) The neuter forms should not be used to refer to living things. One says *esta/ésta es la mujer/la esposa de Miguel* 'this is Miguel's wife', not *esto es . . .*; *ese/ése es el perro del vecino* 'that's the neighbour's dog', not '*eso es . . .*' (= 'that thing is . . .'). But *esto es el móvil de mi hijo* 'this is my son's mobile phone/cell phone'. The neuter form is insulting when applied to a person: *si esto es un marido que venga Dios y lo vea* 'if this (thing) is a husband, let God come and see it!' (exasperated wife).

(4) *Aquello de* (*que*) or *eso de* (*que*) often corresponds to 'the saying that': *Spengler dijo aquello de que "la civilización en última instancia siempre es salvada por un puñado de soldados"* 'Spengler made that remark that "in the final instance civilization is always saved by a handful of soldiers"', *pensé que lo más parecido que existe a eso de ir por lana y volver trasquilado era . . .* (ABE, Pe.) 'I thought that the nearest thing to that saying "to go for wool and come back fleeced" was . . .'.

Esto de que also has a similar meaning: *. . . pero esto de que ha ganado cinco mil euros, no lo creo* 'but as for him/her saying (s)he's won five thousand euros, *that* I don't believe . . .'.

All are in use on both continents except those marked with an asterisk, which seem to be confined to Spain. Examples:

Si haces eso te las vas a tener que haber conmigo or *te las vas a tener que ver conmigo*	If you do that you're going to have to have it out with/face up to me
Él se las echa/se las da de ligón (colloquial, Spain)	He fancies himself as a great womanizer
Eso me pasó por dármelas de genio (GGM, Col., dialogue)	That happened to me because I figured I was a genius
A pesar del susto se las arregló para dejarles una azucarera y una jarrita con leche en el centro de la mesa (MS, Mex.)	Despite the fright he managed to leave them a sugar bowl and a small jug of milk in the middle of the table
Tenía que ingeniárselas para mantener ocupados a sus guardianes (GGM, Col.)	She had to do her best to keep her guards occupied
Por eso te digo que ella también se las trae (CRG, Sp., dialogue)	That's why I'm telling you that she's difficult too
La Policía se las ve y se las desea para controlarlos	The police have a hard time controlling them

(1) The first-person present plural of *habérselas* is *nos las habemos*, not the expected *nos las hemos*: *en don Luis nos las habemos nuevamente con el Hombre y la Mujer* (J. Montesinos, Sp., quoted Seco 1998, 237) 'in Don Luis we are dealing once again with Man and Woman'.

8.5 Neuter demonstrative pronouns

These take the invariable forms *esto*, *eso* and *aquello*. Since they cannot be confused with demonstrative adjectives they *never* have a written accent – something that both learners and native speakers constantly forget. They refer to no noun in particular (cf. Fr. *ceci*, *cela*).

The difference between *esto* 'this', *eso* 'that' and *aquello* 'that' (distant) reflects the difference between *este*, *ese* and *aquel*, discussed at 7.4:

¿Quién ha hecho esto?	Who did this?
—Quisiera llamar a cobro revertido. *—De eso nada*	'I'd like to make a reverse-charge/US collect call.' 'No way/out of the question'
Había comprendido cómo todo aquello jamás tuvo nada que ver con el humor ni con el buen humor (ABE, Pe.)	I had understood how all that never had anything to do with humour or good temper
¿Qué hay de aquello/eso de los billetes falsos?	What's happening about that business of the forged notes?
¿Conocía el significado de aquello? (JV, Mex.)	Did he know the meaning of that business?
¿Cómo podía yo pensar que aquello que parecía tan mentira era verdadero? (JC, Arg., dialogue)	How could I think that that thing which seemed such a lie was true?

(1) Important: the difference between a neuter or non-neuter demonstrative may be crucial. Compare *esto es un desastre* 'this (situation) is a disaster' and *este/éste es un desastre* – 'this (man, boy, book or some other masc. noun) is a disaster'. If the speaker is thinking of a specific noun, the masculine or feminine pronoun must be used as appropriate unless the speaker is referring to a *type* of thing. Pointing to a coat in a shop window one could say *eso es lo que quiero* 'that's the (type/sort of) thing I want' or *ese/ése es el que quiero* 'that's the *one* I want'.

9 Possessive adjectives and pronouns

This chapter deals with words meaning 'my', 'your', 'his', 'her', our', 'their'; 'mine', 'yours', etc.

The main points discussed are:

- Forms of possessive adjectives and pronouns (Section 9.2)
- Uses of *mi*, *tu*, *su*, *nuestro*, *vuestro*, *su* (Section 9.3)
- Replacement of possessive adjectives by *el/la/los/las* (Section 9.3.4)
- Uses of *mío*, *tuyo*, *suyo* (Section 9.4)
- *Detrás mío*, *delante suyo* for *detrás de mí*, *delante de él/ella/usted* (Section 9.7)

9.1 General

Spanish possessives have two forms. The short forms, *mi*, *tu* (no accents!), *su*, etc., appear in front of a noun or noun phrase and correspond to the English 'my', 'your', 'his', 'her', etc. The full forms, *mío*, *tuyo*, *suyo*, etc. roughly correspond to 'mine', 'yours', 'hers', etc., and can only follow a noun or stand alone.

In all cases, the possessive agrees with the number and in some cases the gender of the thing possessed, not of the possessor.

Since the possessives do not in themselves indicate the gender of the possessor, *su libro* can mean 'his book', 'her book', 'your book' (*de usted* or *de ustedes*) or 'their book'.

The most important difference between English and Spanish is that the latter frequently uses the definite article (*el/la/los/las*) and not a possessive adjective 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 9.3.4). This occurs more frequently than in French and it sometimes confuses English speakers.

9.2 Forms of the possessives

9.2.1 'my', 'your', 'his', 'her', 'our', etc. (possessive adjectives)

Personal pronoun	Singular	Plural	Translation
yo	*mi*	*mis*	my
tú (and *vos*, where it is used)	*tu* (no accent!)	*tus*	your (familiar)
él/ella	*su*	*sus*	his/her/its
usted	*su*	*sus*	your (formal)
nosotros/nosotras	*nuestro* (masc.) *nuestra* (fem.)	*nuestros* (masc.) *nuestras* (fem.)	our
vosotros/vosotras	*vuestro* (masc.) *vuestra* (fem.)	*vuestros* (masc.) *vuestras* (fem.)	your (familiar. Spain only)

Personal pronoun	Singular	Plural	Translation
ellos/ellas	*su*	*sus*	their
ustedes	*su*	*sus*	your (formal)

(1) Important: in Latin America *su/sus* is the only second-person plural possessive since *vuestro* is not used outside Spain; see 9.6 for discussion. For the use of *vos* for *tú* see 11.3.

9.2.2 'Mine', 'yours', 'hers', 'his', 'ours', etc. (possessive pronouns)

The following forms are marked for number and gender (*vuestro* is not used in Lat. Am.). See 9.4 for the use of these words.

Personal pronoun	Masc. singular and plural	Fem. singular and plural	Translation
yo	*mío – míos*	*mía – mías*	mine
tú/vos	*tuyo – tuyos*	*tuya – tuyas*	yours (familiar)
él/ella	*suyo – suyos*	*suya – suyas*	his/hers/its
usted	*suyo – suyos*	*suya – suyas*	yours (formal)
nosotros/nosotras	*nuestro – nuestros*	*nuestra – nuestras*	ours
vosotros/vosotras	*vuestro – vuestros*	*vuestra – vuestras*	yours (familiar)
ellos/ellas	*suyo – suyos*	*suya – suyas*	theirs
ustedes	*suyo – suyos*	*suya – suyas*	yours (formal)

9.3 Uses of the possessive adjectives (*mi, tu, su, nuestro*, etc.)

9.3.1 Basic uses

These words agree in number with the thing possessed. *Nuestro* and *vuestro* agree in gender as well with the thing possessed. This is counter-intuitive for English speakers and also for Spanish-speaking learners of English who quite often say things like 'she has forgotten "his" handbag' for 'her handbag', presumably because *el bolso* 'handbag' is masculine:

mi padre/mis padres	my father/my parents
mi madre/mis flores	my mother/my flowers
¿Dónde está tu coche?	Where's your car?
¿Dónde están tus zapatos?	Where are your shoes?
Me fío de su amigo	I trust his/her/your/their friend
Me fío de sus amigos	I trust his/her/your/their friends
nuestro dinero/nuestra dignidad	our money/our dignity
vuestra casa/vuestras casas (Sp.)	your house/your houses
Usted dejó sus cosas aquí	You (sing.) left your/his/her/their things here.
Ustedes dejaron sus cosas aquí	You (plur.) left your/his/her/their things here.
Si ellos no quieren dejarnos su cortacésped . . .	If they don't want to lend us their/your/his/her lawnmower . . .

(1) As can be seen, *su* and *sus* mean several things. 9.5a shows how to remove the ambiguities.

9.3.2 Possessives with more than one noun

If more than one noun is involved, Spanish differs from English in that the former uses one possessive only when the nouns refer to the same, or to aspects of, the same thing. One says *mi padre y mi madre* 'my father and mother' (different persons), *mi chaqueta y mi corbata* 'my jacket and tie' (different things), but *mi amigo y compañero* 'my friend and colleague' (same person), *su paciencia y valor* 'his/her patience and courage' (aspects of a single virtue).

9.3.3 Possessive in military usage

In military circles, possessives are used to address officers: *sí, mi general* 'yes, General', *no, mi coronel* 'no, Colonel', *a sus órdenes mi teniente* 'awaiting orders Lieutenant!'.

9.3.4 Definite article instead of possessives

Important: Spanish frequently uses the definite article where English uses possessive adjectives. *Saqué mi pañuelo de mi bolsillo* 'I took my handkerchief out of my pocket' is not incorrect but it sounds unnatural: *saqué el pañuelo del bolsillo* (provided it is from my own pocket) is more idiomatic. The Academy's *Esbozo . . .*, 3.10.9a, says that sentences like *pase **sus** vacaciones en la playa de X*, 'spend your holidays/vacation on the beach at X' for *pase las vacaciones . . .* sound foreign.

The definite article is used when a verb, pronoun, or context make it clear who the possessor is. The article is therefore much used with parts of the body, and is normal with clothing and other close possessions, e.g. wristwatches, purses, wallets, pens, glasses, etc.

This may confuse English speakers. 'Have you got the passport' normally implies that we do not know whose it is. In *¿tienes el pasaporte?* the second person of the verb shows that the sentence probably means 'have you got your passport' – unless context shows that someone else is involved. In the following sentence only the fact that purses are associated with women makes us translate *el monedero* as 'my purse' (the speaker is female): *metí en una bolsa de playa el bronceador, las toallas, la radio portátil, el libro que estoy leyendo, dos camisetas, el monedero . . .* (CRG, Sp.) 'I put the suntan lotion, the towels, the portable radio, the book I'm reading, two T-shirts, my purse . . . in a beach-bag'. Further examples:

Cierre/Cierra los ojos	Shut your eyes
Diego metió la pata	Diego put his foot in it
Ignacio está mal de la rodilla	Ignacio's got a problem with his knee
Se te ha colgado el ordenador (Lat. Am. *la computadora* or *el computador*)	Your computer's crashed
Llegaba a pensar que Alicia había perdido la razón (SP, Sp.)	I was starting to think that Alicia had lost her mind
Introduje la mano izquierda en el bolsillo derecho del pantalón (ABE, Pe.)	I inserted my left hand in the right pocket of my trousers [*sic*]
Todas las chicas andan con la tripa al aire	All the girls are all going round with their midriff/stomachs showing
Bébete el café/Arréglate el pelo	Drink your coffee/Tidy your hair
La rabia le puso las orejas coloradas y los ojos húmedos (AM. Mex.)	Rage made his ears red and his eyes damp
Me pica la nariz or *me pican las narices*	My nose is itching

(1) But if no word makes clear who the possessor is, a possessive adjective must be used: *mis ojos son azules* 'my eyes are blue' (but *tengo los ojos azules* because the verb shows who is the

possessor), *tus medias tienen carreras en las dos piernas* 'your stockings/tights are laddered in both legs' (*medias* usually means 'socks' in Latin America), *he corregido tu redacción* (cf. *te he corregido la redacción*) 'I've marked/graded your essay'.

With clothes, use of the possessive may suggest that the thing is not being worn: *he visto tu nueva falda en el dormitorio/en una tienda* 'I saw your new skirt in the bedroom/(on sale) in a shop/store'.

(2) When the thing possessed is emphasized, contrasted or particularized by context, or by an adjective or some other words, or whenever ambiguity must be avoided, the possessive adjective usually reappears:

Usted póngase su camisa, no la mía	You put on your shirt, not mine
Vi sus ojos grandes, fatigados, sonrientes y como lacrimosos (FU, Sp.)	I saw her eyes, big, tired, smiling and seemingly tearful
Acerqué mi cabeza a la suya (CF, Mex., dialogue; contrast)	I moved my head closer to his
X deja sus/tus manos suaves y perfumadas (or *le/te deja las manos . . .*)	X leaves your hands soft and perfumed
Toco tus labios . . . (popular song)	I touch your lips . . .

(3) Use of the definite article downplays the thing possessed. *Te toco los labios* can sound 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', but an old-fashioned lover might say *dame tu mano y te haré feliz* 'give me your hand (in marriage) and I will make you happy'.

In polite speech one therefore avoids 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 humorous or ironic, cf. popular British '. . . with "the" wife') 'I always go on holiday/vacation with my wife/girlfriend'.

(4) In spoken Latin-American Spanish, especially Mexican, possessive adjectives are sometimes combined with indirect object pronouns: *les pintamos su casa* (street sign, Oaxaca, Mex.) 'we'll paint your house for you'; *me duele mi cabeza* (colloquial Mexican) 'my head aches', standard Spanish *me duele la cabeza*; *¿te quitas tu ropa?* (EP, Mex., dialogue) 'why don't you take your clothes off?', standard Spanish *¿te quitas la ropa?*

(5) Unlike English, Spanish normally uses the singular when each person possesses one each of a thing: *les sellaron el pasaporte* 'they stamped their passports'. See 2.2.4.

(6) One says ***me*** *quité la camisa* 'I took my shirt off', not *quité la camisa* (= 'I removed the shirt'/'I took the shirt away'), because one's shirt does not come off by itself and effort is required. For this reason one says *abrí los ojos* 'I opened my eyes' (they opened naturally) whereas *me abrí los ojos* suggests that your eyelids were stuck together and had to be separated.

9.4 Uses of *mío, tuyo, suyo,* etc.

9.4.1 Basic uses of *mío, tuyo, suyo,* etc.

The pronominal forms *mío*, *tuyo*, *suyo*, etc. are used:

(**a**) to translate English '. . . of mine/yours/his/ours', etc.:

un amigo mío	a friend of mine
un conocido tuyo	an acquaintance of yours

un poema muy malo mío (*Granma*, Cu., Sp. *un poema mío muy malo*)	a very bad poem of mine
Marco ha vuelto a hacer una de las suyas	Marco's up to his usual tricks again (lit. 'a thing of his')
una actitud muy suya	a very typical attitude of his/hers/yours/theirs

(**b**) as a literary, rather stilted alternative for a possessive adjective:

en mi novela/en la novela mía	in my novel/in this novel of mine
nuestro pan/el pan nuestro de cada día	our daily bread

(**c**) in Spain, in these rather formal phrases (see note 1):

Bueno, hijo mío/hija mía, me voy	Well, dear, I'm off
Te aconsejo que no, amigo mío	I advise you not to, my friend

(**d**) to translate the pronouns 'mine', 'yours' (see the following section for the use of the definite article in this construction):

—¿De quién es este bloc? —Mío	'Whose notepad is this?' 'Mine'
Este garabato es tuyo	This scrawl is yours
Este/éste es el vuestro, ¿verdad?	This one is yours, isn't it?

(e) In a number of set phrases:

de nuestra parte/de parte nuestra for our part	*a costa mía* at my cost	*muy señor mío* (S. Cone *de mi consideración*) Dear Sir (in letters)
a pesar mío/suyo despite me/despite him/her/you	*en torno suyo* around him/her/them/you	
	a propuesta suya at his/her/your/their suggestion	

(1) Latin-American Spanish typically says *mi hijo*, *mi hija*, *mi amigo*: *no, mi amiga, me quedaré en casa. Iré otro día* (AA, Cu., dialogue) 'no my friend. I'll stay at home. I'll go another day'. This gives rise to forms like *mijita* (= *mi hijita*), etc. In Spain a number of loving expressions also optionally use the normal order, e.g. *mi vida/vida mía*, *mi cielo/cielo mío*, *mi amor/amor mío*, *mi cielín*, etc. 'darling'/US 'honey', etc.

9.4.2 Definite article with *mío, tuyo, suyo,* etc.

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:

A tu primo sí lo/le conozco, pero no al suyo	I know your cousin, but not his/hers
Si algo malo te ocurre, yo me haría cargo de los tuyos (MS, Mex., dialogue)	If something bad happens to you I'd look after your loved ones

(**b**) when the pronoun is the subject or object of a verb (even though the verb may not be present):

Toma el mío	Take mine
Tu padre te deja salir, el mío no	Your father lets you go out, mine doesn't
Qué vida tan triste la suya	What a sad life his/hers/yours/theirs is
Los dos DVDs son buenos, pero el nuestro es mejor	The two DVDs are good but ours is better

(**c**) after *ser* 'to be', omission of the article emphasizes actual possession:

la casa de Jeremiah Saint-Amour, que desde ahora era suya (GGM, Col.)	Jeremiah Saint-Amour's house, which from now on was hers
Pero estas cualidades eran mucho más suyas que mías (ABE, Pe.)	But these qualities were much more hers than mine

9.4.3 The neuter article with *lo mío, lo suyo*, etc.

The neuter form of the possessive has various meanings:

Mi marido sabe lo nuestro	My husband knows about us
Ahora estás en lo tuyo	Now you're in your element
Lo vuestro/suyo fue alucinante	What happened to you was mind-boggling
No tuve hijos y nada me impedía dedicarme a lo mío (ES, Mex., dialogue)	I didn't have any children and nothing was stopping me from doing my own thing
Lo mío es confundir (M. de Unamuno, Sp.)	Confusing people is what I do

9.5 Clarification or replacement of possessive by *de* + pronoun

In some cases *de* + a pronoun may be used instead of a possessive, and when *su/sus* refer to *usted* or *ustedes*, *de usted* or *de ustedes* are often added. This happens:

(a) When it is necessary to clarify the meaning of *su/suyo*, which can mean 'his', 'her', 'its', 'your' (*usted*), 'their', 'your' (*ustedes*). Context nearly always makes ownership clear, but it can be emphasized or clarified 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'.

The possibility of ambiguity is illustrated by the question 'is this handkerchief yours or hers?', where one would probably say *¿este pañuelo es de usted o de ella? ¿Este pañuelo es suyo?* 'is this handkerchief yours?' is clear if one is talking directly to a person.

(b) When *de* means 'from' and not 'of', as in *hace tiempo que no tengo noticias de vosotros* (or *noticias vuestras*) 'it's been some time since I've had news from you'.

(1) In Spain, *su* is assumed out of context to be third-person, so that *de usted/ustedes* may be needed to show that the meaning is 'your'. (For Latin-American usage, see 9.6.)

9.6 Possessives: Latin-American usage

Latin-American usage differs from European Spanish in a number of ways:

(**a**) Where *vos* is used instead of *tú* (especially Argentina and much of Central America), *tu/tuyo* are the possessive forms: *vos tenés tu birome* (Arg.) 'you've got your ballpoint pen', in Spain *tú tienes tu bolígrafo*.

(**b**) Since *vosotros* is not used in everyday Latin-American Spanish (see 12.3.1 for details), *su/sus* is the only second-person plural possessive in all styles.

(**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 speech by *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; Sp. *a su cuarto/habitación*)	Do you want to go to his room to see if he's there?
En la oficina de ella no hay la mitad de trabajo que en la mía (MP, Arg., dialogue; Sp. e*n su oficina*)	There isn't half the work in her office that there is in mine

(**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* (*VdeC*, Cu.) '"Who did you hand it over to?" "To our boss"', standard Spanish *a nuestro jefe* or *al jefe*.

(**e**) In popular Spanish in Mexico and the Andes there is a tendency to use *su/sus* in phrases of the type noun + *de* + noun, e.g. *su libro de Juan* 'Juan's book', *su casa de mi amigo* 'my friend's house', standard Spanish *el libro de Juan*, *la casa de mi amigo*.

9.7 Possessives after prepositions and adverbs

A common construction in spoken Latin-American Spanish, also increasingly favoured by the younger generations in Spain, is the use of the possessive pronoun forms (*mío*, *tuyo*, etc.) after prepositions that usually require *de* + a pronoun, and after some adverbs: ?*detrás mío* = *detrás de mí* 'behind me', and even, in sub-standard speech, ?*entró antes mío* '(s)he went in before me', for *entró antes que yo*. Examples:

Adentro mío yo soy igual que todos los reaccionarios (MP, Arg. dialogue; Sp. *dentro de mí* or *por dentro*)	Inside (me) I'm the same as all the reactionaries
Quiero estar cerca tuyo (ibid., Sp. *cerca de ti*)	I want to be near you
No lo consiguió por lo intimidado que estaba en mi delante (MVLl, Pe., dialogue; rare in written Spanish. Sp. *delante de mí*)	He was so intimidated in my presence that he didn't manage it
Pero un segundo autobús que iba por detrás suyo lo embistió con gran violencia (*El País*, Sp., better *detrás de él*)	But a second bus travelling behind collided violently with it

and also (the bracketed forms are used in standard Spanish):

?*encima mía*	(*encima de mí*)	above/over me
?*enfrente suyo*	(*enfrente de él/ella/usted ustedes/ellos/ellas*)	opposite him/her/you/them
?*aparte suyo*	(*aparte de él/ella*, etc.)	apart from him/her, etc.
?*fuera suyo*	(*fuera de él/ella*, etc.)	apart from him/her, etc.

(1) This construction is found in the best writers in Argentina, but it is considered colloquial in other Latin-American countries and incorrect in Mexico. It is spreading in Spain but older speakers may disapprove. However, *en torno nuestro* (literary) 'around us' is considered correct, as is *alrededor mío* for *alrededor de mí* 'around me'.

(2) 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 seems to be spreading in Spain: *está en mi contra* (*Peanuts* cartoon, Arg.) '(s)he/it's against me', *el hecho de que el teléfono se hubiera puesto en mi contra* . . . (SP, Sp.) 'the fact that the phone had turned against me . . .'.

10 Miscellaneous adjectives and pronouns

This chapter discusses a series of important words that may cause problems for English-speaking learners:

ajeno 10.1
algo 10.2
alguien 10.3
alguno 10.4
ambos 10.5
cada 10.6
cierto 10.7
cualquier(*a*) 10.8
demasiado 10.9
medio 10.10
mismo 10.11
mucho and *poco* 10.12
otro 10.13
propio 10.14
solo 10.15
tanto 10.16
todo 10.17
varios 10.18

10.1 *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 otra persona*) 'in someone else's house':

Te preocupas demasiado por lo ajeno	You concern yourself too much with other people's business
Que a la gente no le dé envidia el éxito ajeno (Miss Universe, in *Excélsior*, Mex.)	People shouldn't envy the success of others

(1) *Ajeno* often translates 'a stranger to', 'remote from': *problemas ajenos a mi responsabilidad* 'problems outside my responsibility', *. . . una mujer adulta ajena, aparentemente, a todo* (CRG, Sp.) '. . . an adult woman apparently oblivious to everything', [*El Papa*] *no será ajeno a los desafíos de México* (*Excélsior*, Mex.) 'The Pope will not be indifferent to the challenges facing Mexico'.

10.2 *Algo*: invariable pronoun or adverb

Used as a pronoun, it usually means 'something' or 'anything' in questions and after *poco* and a few other words:

Detrás se veía algo grande, negro	Behind one could see something big, black
A ver si se te ocurre algo	Try and think of something
Esa casa tiene algo de siniestro	That house has something sinister about it
Aquella frase era el preámbulo de algo muy grave (G GM, Col.)	That phrase was the prelude to something very serious
¿Ves algo?	Can you see anything?
¿Sabes algo que yo no sepa? (EM, Mex., dialogue)	Do you know something that I don't know?
Serán pocos los que hayan traído algo	There probably won't be many who have brought anything

(1) Important: used as an adverb it means 'rather', 'somewhat', although *un poco*, *un tanto* or *más bien* are as common in speech: *Estamos algo/un poco/más bien inquietos* 'we're rather/a bit worried', *. . . de hermosas piernas, aunque algo cargada de caderas* (LO, Cu.) ' . . . lovely legs, although she was rather heavy in the hips', *queda algo lejos* 'it's rather a long way away'.

(2) The English question-opener 'do you know something . . .?' is *¿sabes una cosa?* The phrase *¿sabes algo?* means 'do you know anything?'

(3) *Algo así, algo así como*, are translations of 'something like . . .': *pesa algo así como siete kilos* 'it weighs around seven kilos', *se llama Nicanora, o algo así* 'she's called Nicanora, or something like that'.

(4) In negative sentences *nada* translates 'anything' as well as 'nothing': *no sabe nada* '(s)he doesn't know anything', *yo no sé dónde está nada en esta casa* 'I don't know where anything is in this house'. See 27.4.

(5) *Algo* is neuter in gender, so one says *algo en* ***lo*** *que podían creer* 'something they could believe in', *hay algo en lo que estoy totalmente de acuerdo contigo* (JH, Mex.) 'there's something I agree totally with you about'.

10.3 *Alguien*: invariable pronoun

It means 'someone', 'somebody', as in *vi a alguien* 'I saw someone' (note personal *a* before *alguien*; see 26.4.1). It also translates 'anyone', 'anybody' in questions and certain other types of sentence. It is not marked for gender:

Le pidió a Andrés que se quedara en casa por si alguien llamara (GGM, Col.)	He asked Andrés to stay at home in case someone phoned
¿Conoces a alguien que pueda darme un presupuesto para reparar el coche?	Do you know anyone/someone who can give me an estimate for fixing my car?
Siempre viene alguien entre semana	Someone always comes on weekdays

(1) **Alguien de los estudiantes*, **alguien de ellos* are rejected by grammarians, including the Academy, (DPD 38) in favour of *alguno de los estudiantes*, *alguno de* (*entre*) *ellos*, but *alguna de entre ellas* 'one of the girls/women'. Occasionally *alguien de* is necessary since, unlike *alguno*, it does not indicate gender: *yo creo que alude a alguien de esta casa* 'I think (s)he's alluding to someone in this house', *alguien de la familia vendrá a recogerlo* 'someone from the family will come to pick it/him/you up'.

(2) María Moliner notes that ?*darle una cosa a alguien que él no desea* is awkward since *alguien* is too vague to be specifically masculine: *dar a alguien una cosa que no desea*' 'to give something to someone who doesn't want it' avoids the problem.

(3) 'Give it to someone else' is *dáselo a algún otro/alguna otra/alguna otra persona*. **Alguien otro* is not Spanish.

(4) *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 32.7.1): *se ha peleado con uno en la calle* '(s)he's had a fight with some man in the street', *se casó con una de Valencia* 'he married some girl from Valencia'.

10.4 *Algún, alguno, algunos, alguna, algunas*: adjective or pronoun marked for number and gender

10.4.1 General uses of *alguno*

(**a**) As an adjective:

The usual translation is 'some', French *quelque*(*s*). It is shortened to *algún* before a singular masculine noun or noun phrase: *algún día* 'some day', *¡o si te gusta algún otro!* (ABV, Sp., dialogue) 'or if you like some other man!', but *algun* ***a*** *región* 'some region'.

In the singular, *alguno* often means a vague 'one or another', 'one or more . . .'. (For the difference between *unos* and *algunos*, see 10.4.2):

en algún momento de la historia de Perú	at one time or another in the history of Peru
Alguna vez la echaba de menos (SP, Sp.)	From time to time he used to miss her
Deben cuidar bien esos platos. Alguna vez, en el futuro, podrían donarlos a un museo (LO, Cu., dialogue)	You should look after those plates well. Some time in the future you could donate them to a museum
Mira a ver si queda alguna botella de vino	Look and see whether there is a bottle of wine left

(**b**) *Alguno* as a pronoun (the short form *algún* is not used as a pronoun):

Again, the meaning may be a vague 'one or more . . .' or 'one or two':

Alguno lo sabrá	One or other of them will know
—¿Has recibido cartas de tu familia? —Bueno, alguna, sí	'Have you had any letters from your family?' 'Well, one or two, yes'
Una noche la policía entró y nos palpó. Alguno tuvo que ir a la comisaría (JLB, Arg., dialogue; Sp. 'to frisk = *cachear*)	One night the police came in and frisked us. At least one had to go to the police station
Alguno habrá en la oficina que te guste	There must be *some* man at the office you like

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
Algunos ya están deseando marcharse	Some already want to go
Mateo Alemán (*a quien algunos llamaban "el Ratón Miguelito"*) (JA, Mex.),	(President) Mateo Alemán, whom some called 'Mickey Mouse'

(1) Important: in formal, mainly written styles *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* (JMs, Sp.) 'he cultivated absolutely no kind of contact with the common people', *ninguna autoridad militar quiere dar explicación alguna* (*La Prensa*, Bol.) 'no military authority wishes to give any explanation whatsoever', *no puede tolerar pregunta alguna* (EP, Mex.) 'she can't stand any questions at all'. However, *NGLE* 48.4k notes that *ninguno* is becoming more usual in this construction i.e. *ninguna forma/forma ninguna*.

(2) Important: *alguna* is nowadays usually pronounced and written *algún* immediately before feminine nouns beginning with a stressed *a-* or *ha-*. The Academy no longer disapproves of this (DPD 38, *NGLE* 19.5h): *algún/alguna alma perdida* 'some lost soul', *algún/alguna arma defensiva* 'some defensive weapon'.

(3) When followed by *que* and a masculine noun phrase, either *algún* or *alguno* may be used (DPD 38): *algún que otro libro* or *alguno que otro libro* 'some book or other'. Only *alguna que otra* is allowed with feminine nouns.

(4) When the singular *alguno/alguna* is combined with a second-person pronoun, the verb is optionally either second- or third-person, the latter being more usual and recommended by the Academy (DPD 38): *si alguno de vosotros lo sabéis/lo sabe* 'if any of you know(s) it'. In the plural, agreement is with the pronoun: *algunas de vosotras lo sabéis* 'some of you women know', *algunas de nosotras generalmente caminamos despacito* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'some of us women generally walk slowly'. But note *algunos de nosotros han muerto* (JP, Mex.) 'some of us have died', which obviously excludes the speaker.

(5) Important: the English 'some' (and 'any') have no equivalent in Spanish when they come before a noun that refers to only a part or quantity of something, as in 'give me some water' *dame agua/un poco de agua*, 'you haven't bought any pins' *no has comprado alfileres*, 'have you got any wholemeal bread?' *¿tiene usted pan integral?*

In some cases, *un poco* or *ninguno* may be good translations of 'some': *yo también quiero un poco* 'I want some (a little) too', *¿chuletas de ternera? No tenemos* 'veal chops/cutlets? We haven't got any', *no tenemos ninguna* 'we haven't got a single one'; *no queda apenas ninguna* 'there are hardly any left'. 'Any' in the sense of 'it doesn't matter which' is *cualquiera* (see 10.8): *comidas a cualquier hora* 'meals at any time'.

(6) When *alguno* is the direct or indirect object of a verb and it comes before the verb for purposes of focus, agreement may be governed by the number of an accompanying noun or pronoun or it may be third-person: *a alguno de vosotros* ***os/lo/le*** *quisiera ver yo en un lío como este/éste* 'I'd like to see one of you in a mess like this'.

10.4.2 *Unos* and *algunos* contrasted

These two plural words are not always easily distinguished (*unos* has other uses discussed at 3.4).

(**a**) The two words are interchangeable in the phrase *algunos/unos . . . otros*:

Algunos/Unos vinieron, otros no	Some came, others didn't
. . . las explicaciones teológicas que hacían plausible la venta de unos terrenos y la compra de otros (AM, Mex., or *algunos terrenos*)	. . . the theological (i.e. obscure) explanations that made acceptable the the sale of some plots of land and the purchase of others
En algunas semanas [*la morera*] *estaría llena de frutas* (SA, Arg., or *unas*)	In a few weeks the mulberry tree would be full of fruit

(**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'.

(**c**) Only *unos/unas* can be used to make non-generic nouns and adjectives: compare *son payasos* 'they are clowns (by profession)', *son unos payasos* 'they are (acting like) clowns'. See 4.2.1c for details.

(**d**) Only *unos* can be used in plural reciprocal construction: *se admiran los unos a los otros* 'they admire one another'.

(**e**) **Important**: *algunos* is used when no implication of 'a few' is intended: *algunos mexicanos hablan tres idiomas* 'some Mexicans speak three languages' (since *unos* here would mean 'a certain small group of'). When 'a few' is intended, the two are interchangeable and *unos* is usually followed by *cuantos*: *me dio unas* (*cuantas*)*/algunas monedas de un euro* '(s)he gave me a couple of one-euro coins', *. . . o cuando arriesgábamos algunos dólares en el casino* (ABE, Pe., or *unos cuantos*) ' . . . or when we gambled a few dollars in the casino'.

10.5 *Ambos*: adjective or pronoun marked for number and gender

'Both', though it is rather literary and *los/las dos* is more usual in speech.

en ambos/los dos casos	in both cases
. . . cuando ambos se vinieron a vivir a la capital desde Acapulco (*GZ*, Mex.)	. . . when both of them came from Acapulco to live in the capital
—¿Cuál de los dos es correcto? —Ambos/Los dos	'Which of the two is correct?' 'Both'

(1) Important: the definite article is not used with *ambos*: *ambas chicas* 'both/both (of) the girls', never **ambas las chicas*. 'One of both' is: *uno/a de los/las dos*.

(2) Note also the following: *sus dos hijas/primos* 'both his/her daughters/cousins', 'his/her two daughters/cousins'. *He hablado con tus dos hermanos* 'I spoke with both your brothers', not **tus ambos hermanos*, etc. *Tanto el profesor como los alumnos lo oyeron* 'both the teacher and the students heard it' – never ***ambos el profesor y . . .*'. which is a bad translation of the English 'both the . . . and . . .'.

10.6 *Cada*: invariable adjective and pronoun

'Each', 'every'. *Cada* always precedes the noun:

Cada loco con su tema	'Each to his/her own' (lit. 'every madman with his obsession')
cada uno de los alumnos . . .	each of the students . . .
un libro por cada tres alumnos	one book for every three students
El fenómeno ocurre cada década aproximadamente (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	The phenomenon occurs roughly every decade
Cada día me preocupa más esto de la taquicardia (ABE, Pe.)	Every day I'm more worried by this tachycardia business (increased heart rate)
—¿Quiere de lana o de seda? —Uno de cada (colloquial; pronoun)	'Do you want wool or silk?' 'One of each.'

(1) *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', *para entonces cada vez se alejaban más las posibilidades de que México tuviera nuevos presidentes militares* (JA, Mex.) 'by then the possibility that Mexico would have more military presidents was becoming ever more remote'. English speakers should avoid using **más y más*, **menos y menos*.

(2) In colloquial speech in Spain and Latin America *cada* is an equivalent of 'all sorts of . . .': *dice cada tontería* 'the nonsense (s)he talks . . .', *hay cada ladrón por ahí* 'there are all sorts of thieves there . . .', *¡me hace usted cada pregunta!* (SP, Mex., dialogue), 'the things you ask me!'.

(3) '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'. *Cada quien* is frequent in Mexican texts.

(4) ?*Me baño cada día* or ?*voy cada mañana* for *. . . todos los días*, *. . . todas las mañanas* are widespread, but are rejected by some speakers as Catalanisms, but the construction is increasingly accepted and is correct in certain contexts. See 10.17.

(5) Note *salía cada poco con ella* 'he went out with her occasionally/now and then', i.e. *de vez en cuando*; also *cada poco me decía que me quería* '(s)he kept telling me that (s)he loved me'.

(6) The phrase *cada que* 'every time that' is heard in Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela and Paraguay: *tomamos café cada que viene al Puerto* (from *NGLE* 19.9d) 'we have coffee every time he comes to the port'; elsewhere . . . *cada vez que viene. Cada que* is not used in Spain.

10.7 *Cierto*: adjective, marked for number and gender

'Certain', i.e. 'specific'. Used thus it precedes the noun:

en ciertos casos	in certain cases
cierto alemán	a certain German
. . . o en ciertos periodos de la presidencia Fernández (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	. . . or at certain periods during the Fernández presidency
Y esto, claro, flotaba de cierta manera en el ambiente (ABE, Pe),	And this, of course, was to some extent floating in the atmosphere

(1) *Determinado* is a more formal synonym: *en determinados trenes existe un servicio de camareros* 'on certain trains waiter service is provided'.

(2) *Un cierto/una cierta* for 'a certain' are sometimes condemned as borrowings from French or English but are common in all styles; the Academy does not now object. *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/hers to exaggerate' – and as a less common colloquial alternative to *un tal*: *se casó con un cierto/un tal Dionisio de México* 'she married a certain Dionisio from Mexico'.

(3) Placed after a noun or after a verb like *ser* or *parecer*, *cierto* means 'fixed', 'accurate', 'true': *hemos tenido noticias ciertas de otro enfrentamiento* 'we have received accurate reports of another clash', *¿Está enfermo? ¿Es cierto o no?* (MP, Arg., dialogue) 'Is he ill/sick? Is it true or not?', *si eso es cierto es un pecado* (GZ, Mex., dialogue) 'if that's true it's a sin'.

10.8 *Cualquier, cualquiera, cualesquiera*: adjective or pronoun, marked for number

As an adjective 'any'; as a pronoun 'anybody'/'anyone' (Fr. *n'importe quel*).

(**a**) As an adjective

Before any noun or noun phrase, the *a* of *cualquiera* (but optionally of *cualesquiera*) is dropped: *en cualquier momento* 'at any moment', *cualquier mujer* 'any woman'.

Cualquier(*a*) normally precedes the noun: *duerme a cualquier hora del día* '(s)he sleeps at any hour of the day', *se puede pagar con cualquier moneda* 'one can pay in any currency'. The idea of random choice is strengthened if it follows the noun, cf. English 'any at all'. When used thus of people the effect is often pejorative, as is the English 'any old':

. . . no una muerte cualquiera, sino la muerte propia (MB, Ur.)	. . . not any old death, but one's own death
Un martes cualquiera . . . él dijo de un modo que apareciera casual (GGM, Col. Sp. *pareciera casual*)	One Tuesday (i.e. 'one Tuesday out of the blue') he said, in a way intended to seem casual

Vamos a pasear por una calle cualquiera	Let's just walk down any street
Su esposa no es una mujer cualquiera	His wife isn't just any woman (i.e. she is something special)

(**b**) As a pronoun (the final *-a* is always retained):

Cualquiera de los tres temas era un terreno espinoso (MS, Mex.)	Any of the three topics was thorny territory
Cualquiera que sea el resultado	Whatever the result is
Cualquiera diría que eres millonario	Anybody would think you're a millionaire
. . . la necesidad en que se ven de desahogarse con cualquiera (ABE, Pe.)	. . . the need they find themselves in to let off steam in front of anybody
No cualquiera tiene un auto como el de nosotros (SV, Ch., dialogue. Sp. *un coche como el nuestro*)	Not everyone (lit. 'not anyone') has a car like ours
Era un hombre como otro cualquiera (LP, Mex.)	He was a man like any other
Cualesquiera que sean los desafíos en el camino de la construcción del comunismo (FC, Cuba)	Whatever the challenges along the path towards the building of Communism . . .

(1) The plural adjective *cualesquiera* is nowadays uncommon since the idea can be expressed by a singular noun: *cualquier mujer que no simpatice con el feminismo . . .* 'any woman who doesn't/any women who don't sympathize with feminism . . .'.

There is a tendency in spontaneous speech and in informal writing to use the singular *cualquiera* where the plural is needed. This applies to both the pronoun and the adjective: *se les garantiza plaza escolar a sus hijos cualquiera que sean sus estudios* (*El País*, Sp., better *cualesquiera*) 'their children are guaranteed school places, whatever their studies' (i.e. whatever they have studied). Careful speakers, and the Academy (*NGLE* 20.4e), reject this, and the plural is normally used in writing.

(2) One occasionally hears *cualquiera* used instead of *cualquier* before a feminine noun, especially in Latin America, but foreigners should probably avoid this: ?*de cualquiera manera* (CF, Mex., dialogue) ?*y más malvados que cualquiera otra tribu* (MVLl, Pe., dialogue) 'and more wicked than any other tribe'. This use is seen in Ortega y Gasset, Valera and a few other pre-mid-twentieth-century Spanish stylists.

(3) *Cualquier cantidad* is heard in most of Latin America, but not in Spain, with the meaning 'a great quantity of', e.g. *cualquier cantidad de flores* 'a great quantity of flowers', Spain . . . *una gran cantidad de . . .*

(4) Note the subjunctives in *. . . cualquiera que* ***sea*** *la explicación que él* ***dé*** 'whatever explanation he gives'; see 39.15.2 and 20.5.4 for an explanation.

10.9 *Demasiado*: adjective and pronoun marked for number and gender, or invariable adverb

As an adjective 'too many'/'too much'; as an adverb 'too'/'too well'.

(**a**) As an adjective it must agree in number and gender:

Has comido demasiadas uvas	You've eaten too many grapes
Pero el calor era demasiado hasta para una danza tan calma (MP, Arg., dialogue)	but the heat was too much even for such a slow dance

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 ese/ése me lo conozco demasiado	I know him only too well
. . . ahora puede que sea demasiado tarde (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	. . . it may be too late now
Esto es demasiado difícil	This is too difficult

(1) The adverb and the adjective mean different things: *demasiado* (adv.) *buenas intenciones* = 'intentions that are too good', but *demasiadas* (adj.) *buenas intenciones* = 'too many good intentions' (from *NGLE* 20.5n).

(2) In some Lat. Am. countries, e.g. Peru, the adverb *demasiado* may mean 'a lot' in popular speech, so *la quiero demasiado* means *la quiero muchísimo* 'I'm really in love with her' (*NGLE* 20.8b).

10.10 *Medio* adjective and adverb

On both continents this word functions as an adverb (invariable in form) or as an adjective (inflected for number and gender), both meaning 'half':

adverb:

Están medio borrachos	They're half-drunk
Yo tenía medio abandonados a los santos (PJG, Cu.)	I'd more or less given up the Saints (i.e. 'I was no longer a believer')
Déjame. Estoy medio dormido	Leave me alone. I'm half asleep

adjective

media pinta/media luna	half a pint/half-moon
Incautan media tonelada de mariguana en Tijuana (*Excélsior*, Mex. *Marihuana* elsewhere)	Half a ton of marihuana seized in Tijuana
el americano medio	the average American
las clases medias	the middle classes

(1) It is often used colloquially in Latin America to mean 'rather', 'pretty' (Sp. *bastante*, *más bien*) as in *es medio linda* (Sp. *guapa*) 'she's pretty good-looking', *son medio tontos* 'they're pretty stupid', *yo también estoy medio enredado estos días* (LO, Cu., dialogue) 'I'm pretty tied up too these days'.

(2) In the Canary Islands and much of Latin America there is a strong popular tendency, sometimes seen in print in Latin America, to make the adverb agree in gender: *ellas son medi**as** locas* 'they (fem.) are half crazy', for *medio locas*; *llegó media desilusionada* (popular Mexican, quoted Kany, 55) 'she arrived pretty disillusioned', *la tenía media atragantada* (MP, Arg., popular dialogue) '. . . she had it stuck half way down her throat'. The Academy advocates *medio* for the adverb in all contexts.

10.11 *Mismo* (and Latin-American variants): adjective marked for gender and number

(**a**) 'The same'

When it means 'the same', which is its usual meaning on both continents, it is always placed before the noun or noun phrase that it qualifies:

Lleváis/Llevan la misma blusa	You're wearing the same blouse
. . . con los mismos mozos, pero un día griegos, otro andaluces, otro franceses, aunque vinieran de donde vinieran (*ABE*, Pe. In Spain *mozos* = *camareros*, Mex. *meseros*)	. . . with the same waiters, but (dressed as) Greeks one day, Andalusians another, French on yet another, regardless of where they came from
Estos dos casos son el mismo	These two cases are the same (i.e. identical)
Estos dos son los mismos	These two are the same (i.e. as before)
—¿Es usted don Francisco? —El mismo	'Are you Don Francisco?' 'I am indeed'

(**b**) Placed either before or after a noun, *mismo* means 'self-same'/'very'/'right':

Vivo en Madrid mismo/en el mismo Madrid	I live in Madrid itself
Aparca el helicóptero en su mismo jardín/ en su jardín mismo	(S)he parks the helicopter right in his/her garden

To avoid ambiguity, *mismo* must be placed after the noun if it means 'very', 'self-same': *el mismo Papa* 'the Pope himself' or 'the same Pope', *el Papa mismo* = only 'the Pope himself'. See also *propio*, 10.14b.

(**c**) Placed after a pronoun it emphasizes the pronoun e.g. *yo mismo* 'I myself', *ella misma* 'she herself':

—¿Quién construyó el chalet? — Yo mismo/misma (*el chalet* = 'detached house' in Spain)	'Who built the house?' 'I did myself'
No se llora por los demás. Se llora por una misma (ES, Mex., dialogue)	One doesn't weep for others. One weeps for oneself (woman speaking)

(**d**) Placed after an adverb or adverbial phrase, *mismo* is itself an adverb and is therefore invariable:

por eso mismo	for that very reason
ahora mismo/ya mismo	right now/right away
aquí mismo	right here
Mañana mismo empiezo a escribir (ABE, Pe. *Mañana* is an adverb here)	I'll start writing *tomorrow* without fail
Estoy al lado mismo del súper (?*mismo al lado de* is dialect)	I'm right next to the supermarket

But if the adverbial phrase contains a noun not accompanied by the definite article *mismo* may or may not agree with it. Agreement seems always to be correct and is recommended:

esta noche mismo/misma	this very night
Vino esta mañana mismo/misma	(S)he/it came this very morning
En España mismo/misma no se pudo evitar la llegada del bikini	In Spain itself it was impossible to prevent the arrival of the bikini

When the definite article is used, *mismo* is an adjective and must agree in number and gender: *lo descubrieron en la chimenea mism**a*** 'they found it in the chimney itself'.

(1) *Lo mismo* may mean *la misma cosa*, or it may be adverbial: *como me vuelvan a decir lo mismo/la misma cosa . . .* 'if they say the same thing to me again . . .', *lo mismo vendían sardinas que libros de mecánica* (AM, Mex.) 'they as readily sold sardines as books on mechanics', *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 como* is sub-standard for *lo mismo que* 'the same as'. For *lo mismo* as a familiar European Spanish word for 'perhaps' see 20.2.4.

(2) Note the following difference: *esa casa es lo mismo que* (*igual que*) *aquella/aquélla* 'that house is the same as that other one' (i.e. the same thing is true of it, not the same house), *esa casa es la misma que compró Agustín* 'that house is the same one that Agustín bought'.

(3) *Mismísimo* is a colloquial emphatic form of *mismo* in sense (**b**): *el mismísimo presidente lo/le felicitó* 'the President himself congratulated him'.

(4) Mexican and Central-American everyday 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: *en la pura cabeza* (*en la misma cabeza*) 'right on the head', etc. (from Kany, 57ff), *a puro Villa* (bus-driver in Tabasco, Mex.) '(I'm going) only to Villahermosa' (Sp. *solo/sólo a*) *. . .; había puras mujeres* (colloquial Chilean) 'there were only women there' (Sp. *no había más que mujeres*).

(5) *Mismamente* (= *igual*) is rustic or jocular.

10.12 *Mucho* and *poco*: adjectives and pronouns marked for number and gender, or invariable adverbs

'Much' or 'many', and 'little' or 'few'. Used as adjectives they agree in number and gender. Used as adverbs they are invariable.

(**a**) As adjectives and pronouns:

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 on the patio
Pon poca pimienta	Don't put much pepper on/in it
Somos muchos/pocos	There are a lot/not many of us
su poca paciencia	her/his scant patience
—¿Cuánta harina has comprado?	'How much flour have you bought?'
—Poca/Mucha	'Not much/A lot'
Lo poco gusta, lo mucho cansa	Brevity is the soul of wit (lit. 'little pleases, much tires')
Muchas se quejan de las nuevas horas de apertura (pronoun)	Many women are complaining about the new opening hours

(**b**) Adverbial uses:

Estoy añorando mucho a mi patria	I'm missing my home country a lot
Poco antes de las siete llegó su hijo Andrés (GGM, Col.)	Shortly before seven his son Andrés arrived

Sale poco últimamente	(S)he hasn't been out much lately
La lechuga podría ser mucho más dañina de lo que crees (*Excélsior*, Mex.)	Lettuce could be a lot more damaging (to your health) than you think
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

(1) Important: before *más*, *menos*, *mayor* and *menor*, when these are followed by a noun (present or implied), *mucho* or *poco* agree in number and gender – a fact that English speakers are prone to forget: *tienen much**os** más hijos que tú/tienen much**os** 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 madurez* (FC, Cu.) 'twenty-seven years have not passed in vain, there is much more experience, much more maturity', *Eduardo tiene mucha menos paciencia* 'Eduardo has much less patience', *a mucha mayor velocidad* 'at much greater speed', This construction is apparently not obligatory in Latin America: *cuando me jubile, me pasarán sin duda much**o** menos cosas* (MB, Ur., Sp. *much**as** menos cosas*) 'when I retire, no doubt a lot fewer things will happen to me'. Informants from Peru and Mexico found this acceptable, but it is rejected by Spaniards.

Before adjectives and adverbs, *mucho* and *poco* are adverbs and invariable in form: *los problemas eran mucho mayores* 'the problems were much greater'.

(2) One should avoid *mucho* or *mucha* without a following noun in sentences like ?*mucho viene de Venezuela* 'A lot [of crude oil] comes from Venezuela', correctly *. . . gran parte viene de Venezuela.*

(3) 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? That's a lot', *¿tres cajas de ciruelas? Es poco* 'three 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', *y será mucha la cerveza que consumirán, para provecho del dueño* (MP, Arg., dialogue) 'and great will be the quantities of beer that they'll consume, to the owner's profit'.

(4) *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"'.

(5) *Muy de* is quite often used in expressions like *esa calle es muy de farmacias* 'that street's got a lot a pharmacies in it', *no soy muy de ir a misa* 'I'm not a great one for going to Mass', *uno solo vino muy de traje y corbata* (MSQ, Arg.) 'only one came, all dressed up in a suit and tie'.

(6) *Poco* (but not *un poco*) negates a following adverb or adjective: *poco frecuente* = 'infrequent'. See 5.12.

(7) 'Very much' = *muchísimo*. *Muy mucho* is archaic or jocular.

(8) *Un poco de* is invariable, but phrases like ?*una poca de sal* 'a bit of salt' are heard in popular or humorous speech, especially in Latin America.

10.13 Otro: adjective/pronoun, marked for number and gender

Adjectivally 'other'/'another'; pronominally 'another one'/'others'. Like the English 'another' *otro* is often ambiguous: *voy a pedir otro café* 'I'm going to have another coffee' may mean that you want more coffee (i.e. *otro café más*) or that you want your coffee replaced.

Otra persona no te creería	Another person wouldn't believe you
Ponle otro sello (Lat. Am. *otra estampilla*)	Put another (or 'an extra') stamp on it
en circunstancias otras que aquellas en que . . .	in circumstances other than those in which . . .
¿Qué otro político habría dicho eso?	What other politician would have said that?
El que lo hizo fue otro	The one who did it was someone else
Otros 40 inmigrantes en el barco lograron nadar hasta la costa (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	Another 40 immigrants in the boat managed to swim to the shore
Se lanzaban la pelota unos a otros	They were throwing the ball to one another

(1) **Un otro* for 'another' (Fr. *un autre*) is a constant mistake of English speakers: *dame otro* 'give me another', not **dame un otro. Un otro* is occasionally found in colloquial speech in Argentina and elsewhere in Latin America (*NGLE* 13.10p). Catalans sometimes say *un otro* because of the influence of *un altre* in their own language.

(2) The possessives *mi*, *tu*, *su*, *nuestro*, *vuestro* precede *otro*, as do *alguno*, *ninguno*; but other adjectives follow it, although *mucho* may appear in either position: *tu otro pantalón* 'your other trousers', *en algún/ningún otro lugar* 'in some/no other place', *sé que estoy manipulada como otra mucha gente* (interview, Sp., 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* (AM, Mex., 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'; *otros varios millones de campesinos* (MVLl, Pe.) 'several million other peasants'. The order number + *otros/as* is sometimes seen in Latin America, i.e. *dos otros* for *otros dos.*

(3) *Los/las demás* may be a synonym of *los otros/las otras* if the latter means 'the rest'/'the remainder': *todos los demás países europeos* 'all the other European countries', *. . . Talavante, un torero distinto a los demás* (*El Economista*, Mex.) 'Talavante, a bullfighter unlike the rest'.

(4) *El resto de* also means 'the others' in the sense of 'the remainder'. The usual construction is with the definite article – *. . . las leyes, que debemos acatar como el resto de los ciudadanos* (*Libro de estilo de El País*, 2014) 'the laws, which we should respect like the rest of the citizens' – but the definite article after the *de* is often omitted nowadays: *. . . el resto de instituciones que rigen la vida profesional de El País* (ibid.) 'the rest of the institutions that govern the professional life of *El País*'.

(5) The phrase *alguno. . . que otro* is noteworthy: *en México beber una copa con el desayuno podría generar caras de sorpresa y alguno que otro reclamo* (*Excélsior*, Mex.) 'in Mexico drinking a glass of something alcoholic with breakfast might create surprised looks and a protest or two'. For the choice between *algún que otro* and *alguno que otro* before masculine nouns, see 10.4.1 note 3.

(6) The archaic adverb *otramente* 'otherwise' is now virtually extinct and is replaced by *de otra manera/de otro modo*.

10.14 *Propio*: adjective, marked for number and gender

(**a**) Usually it means 'own', as in:

mi propio taxi/tus propias convicciones	my own taxi/your own convictions
Cada quien se crea su propio infierno (EP, Mex.)	Everyone creates their own Hell
Si no lo veo con mis propios ojos no lo creo	If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I wouldn't have believed it
en defensa propia	in self-defence

(**b**) It can also mean 'self-same', 'very', etc. (the same as *mismo* at 10.11b.):

Las tachaduras son del propio autor	The crossings-out are by the author himself
Nos dio audiencia el propio obispo	The bishop himself granted us an audience

Propio is not used after pronouns: *lo hizo ella misma*, not **ella propia*.

(**c**) 'Appropriate', 'right', 'peculiar', 'characteristic':

Ese olor es propio del butano	That smell is characteristic of butane
Ese lenguaje no es propio de un diplomático	That language is not suitable for a diplomat
Es propio de él llegar tres horas tarde	It's like him/typical of him to arrive three hours late

(1) *Lo propio* can be an alternative for *lo mismo* 'the same thing': *Miguel dijo lo mismo/lo propio* 'Miguel said the same', *sucedió lo mismo/lo propio en casa de Toni* 'the same thing happened in Toni's house'.

10.15 *Solo*: adjective, marked for number and gender; *sólo* or *solo*: invariable adverb

The adjective means 'alone', the adverb 'only' (i.e. *solamente*). The adverb was always marked with a written accent, but in 1959 the Academy decreed that the accent is needed only for clarity. In 2010, this 'decree' was downgraded to a 'recommendation'. Ambiguity is possible only 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 at home'/'only at home'. *Solamente* is an unambiguous alternative for *sólo*. *El País* always prints *sólo* for the adverb.

(**a**) Adjectival uses:

Yo me quedé solo	I was left alone
Octavia me dijo que tenía que regresar sola (ABE, Pe.)	Octavia told me she had to go back alone
En esta casa cada quien se sirve solo (AO, Mex.)	In this house everyone helps themselves to food
dos cafés solos	two black coffees
(cf. *dos cafés solo/sólo*	only two coffees)

(**b**) Adverbial examples (unless indicated otherwise, *solamente* could be used instead):

Solo/sólo así se solucionarán estos problemas	Only in this way will these problems be solved
Millones de personas disfrutan de la luz eléctrica con solo/sólo accionar un simple conmutador	Millions of people enjoy electric light simply at the press of a switch
Tan solo/sólo se me ocurrió en ese instante lo que podría haber pedido Graciela (MP, Arg., dialogue. Not **tan solamente*)	It only occurred to me at that moment what Graciela might have asked for

(1) A negative + *más. . . que* means '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'. It must not be confused with *más de*, used with numbers to mean 'more than'. See 6.5.

(2) *A solas* strictly means 'alone' (i.e. with no one else present), and is occasionally required for the sake of clarity to avoid confusion between *sólo* and *solo*, as in *necesito estar a solas/solo contigo* 'I want to be alone with you' (*solo* might be heard as *sólo* 'only with you'), or *lo solucionó a solas* '(s)he solved it alone (no one else present)' and *lo solucionó solo* 'he solved it alone' (without help). Cf. also *pero nunca había fumado a solas* (GGM, Col.) 'but she had never smoked on her own', *la primera noche en que quedó a solas con él* (EP, Mex.) 'the first night she's found herself alone with him'.

A solas is not normally used with inanimate things. *Estuve a solas con mis pensamientos* 'I was alone with my thoughts' is an elegant, rather poetic alternative to *solo*.

(3) 'Not only . . . but also' is *no solo/sólo . . .* ***sino***. See 37.1a.

(4) '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', *es lo único concreto que tenemos* (LO, Cu.) 'it's the only real thing we have', *lo único es que no sé nadar* 'the only thing is I can't swim', *es hijo único* 'he's an only child'. Compare *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'.

(5) In some Latin-American countries, e.g. Cuba, *único* may be used as an adverb meaning 'only', where other regions use *únicamente*, cf. *único* (for *únicamente/solamente/sólo*) *en esta región* 'only in this region'.

10.16 *Tanto*: adjective and pronoun, marked for number and gender; or invariable adverb

For the use of *tanto* and *tan* in comparisons see 6.15.1. *Tanto* basically means 'so much', 'so many' (French *tant* ***de***).

(**a**) As an adjective it must agree in number and gender:

tanta nieve/tanto dinero/tantos problemas	so much snow/so much money/so many problems
. . . uno de tantos consuelos del pobre (MP, Arg., dialogue)	. . . one of the many consolations of the poor

It can also function as a noun or pronoun (invariable in form as *tanto*):

No creí que se atreviera/atreviese a tanto	I didn't think (s)he/you would be that daring
Cobran un tanto por ciento de comisión	They take a certain percentage 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	(S)he ran so much that (s)he couldn't speak
Tanto era así que . . . (see note 2 for *tan era así . . .*)	So much was it so that . . .
tanto mejor/tanto peor para ellos	all the better/so much the worse for them
—Es nada menos que de cincuenta pesos— ¡Tanto mejor! (J JA, Mex. Dialogue)'	'It's 50 pesos no less.' 'So much the better
Es tanto un problema para la oposición como para el gobierno	It's as much a problem for the opposition as for the government

(1) *Un tanto* (invariable) can mean *un poco*: *Manolo es un tanto raro* 'Manolo is a bit strange', *los reportes muestran resultados positivos aunque un tanto limitados* (*Excélsior*, Mex. Sp. *los informes* for *reportes*) 'the reports reveal positive albeit rather limited results'. The *NGLE* 20.7j notes that the variant *un tanto cuanto* . . . is current in Mexico.

(2) Before adjectives or adverbs, *tan* is required: *usted ha sido tan acogedor* 'you've been so welcoming', *se levanta tan de mañana que nadie lo/le ve salir* 'he gets up so early in the morning that no one sees him leave', *tan a propósito* 'so much on purpose'/'so relevantly', *te lo enviaré tan pronto como pueda* 'I'll send it to you as soon as I can'.

One can say *tan poco – me decepcionó que viniese tan poca gente* 'I was disappointed that so few people came' – but not **tan mucho/a/os/as*: *me alegré de que viniera tanta gente* 'I was glad so many people came'.

One must distinguish between phrases like *tan* (adverb) *buena voluntad* 'such good will/kindness' and *tanta buena voluntad* 'so much good will/kindness'.

Before *mejor*, *peor*, *mayor* and *menor* the full form is used: *tanto mejor/peor para usted* 'so much the better/worse for you', *el peligro era tanto mayor debido a la radiactividad* 'the danger was all the greater due to radioactivity'.

(3) *Tan* before verbs instead of *tanto* is found on both continents, although *tanto* is more common in Spain: *tan es así* = *tanto es así* 'it was so true', *tan no la conocen que la dejan morir de hambre* (EP, Mex., Sp. *tanto . . ., tan poco la conocen*) 'they know so little about her that they let her starve to death'.

(4) *Tanto* plus a singular noun is colloquial and often sarcastic for 'lots of', 'so many': *hay tanto ricacho por aquí* 'there are loads of stinking-rich people round here'.

(5) *Tanto . . . que* for 'as much as' is not Spanish: *no viaja tanto* ***como*** *tú* '(s)he doesn't travel as much as you'. *Tanto . . . que* can only mean 'so much . . . that'. See 6.15.1.

(6) *Qué tanto* and *qué tan* are considered correct in Latin America outside the Southern Cone for 'how much?', 'to what extent?': *¿qué tan posible es que llegue a ser presidente?* (*Excélsior*, Mex.) 'how possible is it that he'll get to be President?', *qué tanto te gusta?* 'how (much) do you like it?'. In Spain one might say *¿cuál es la posibilidad de que llegue a ser presidente*? or *¿qué posibilidad tiene de llegar a ser . . .?*, *¿cuánto te gusta?*

10.17 *Todo*: adjective/pronoun, marked for number and gender

'All', 'every', 'the whole of', 'any'.

(**a**) When not followed by a definite or indefinite article it usually means 'every' or 'any':

todo producto alimenticio que contenga colorantes artificiales . . .	any food product containing artificial colouring . . .
todo español sabe que . . .	every Spaniard knows that . . .
en todo caso	in any case

In all these cases *cualquier* could be used instead of *todo*.

(**b**) With the definite article, possessives or demonstratives, or before proper names, its usual meaning is 'the whole of'/'all':

toda la noche/durante todo aquel año	all night/during all that year
todos los cinco	all five of them
Varadero. Es una playa increíble. Todos los extranjeros nos envidian (LO, Cu., dialogue)	Varadero. It's an incredible beach. All the foreigners envy us
Incluso Ricardo, con toda su paciencia, se salió del seminario	Even Ricardo, with all his patience, walked out of the seminar
Todo Barcelona habla de ello (see 1.3.9 note 1 for the gender of *todo* here)	All Barcelona's talking about it

The order noun + *todo/a/os/as*, as in *los comensales todos . . .* for *todos los comensales* 'all the dinner guests' or *la casa toda . . .* for *toda la casa* 'the whole house' is literary in style

(**c**) Followed by the definite article and plural periods of time it means 'every':

El veterinario viene todos los meses	The vet comes every month
todos los viernes/años	every Friday/year

(**d**) Pronominally, the singular means 'everything', the plural 'everyone'/'everybody'/'all of them': *se enfada por todo* '(s)he gets cross about everything', *es todo propaganda* 'it's all propaganda:

—¿Dónde están las fresas? —Me las he comido todas	'Where are the strawberries?' 'I've eaten them all'
Pago por todos	I'm paying for everyone

(**e**) Agreement of *todo* should be noted in the following cases:

When an adjectival phrase follows *todo*, the latter agrees with the subject: *la verja está toda oxidada* 'the railings are all rusty', *estaba toda cubierta de harina* 'she was completely covered in flour'. But when a noun follows there is some uncertainty: *su cara era toda pecas* 'his/her face was all freckles', *el cielo era todo nubes* 'the sky was all clouds', *esa niña es toda ojos* (from Moliner, II, 1930), 'that girl's all eyes'; but *su madre es todo* (or *toda*) *corazón* 'his/her mother is all heart' (*GDLE* 16.6.5).

Women usually say *soy toda oídos* 'I'm all ears' but one hears *todo . . .*; also *es toda/todo sonrisas esta mañana* 'she's all smiles this morning'. Cf. also *estas chuletas son todo hueso* 'these chops/cutlets are all bone'. In such cases the Academy admits both constructions.

(**f**) Relative clauses involving *todo*

The following sentences illustrate some translation problems:

todos los que dicen eso	all who say that
todo el que diga eso/todo aquel que diga eso (the latter is literary)	anyone who says that
Son todo cuentos	It's all stories/make-believe
Cuanto/Todo cuanto escribe es bueno (literary) or *todo lo que escribe es bueno*	Everything (s)he writes is good
este poeta, cuyas palabras todas quedarán grabadas en nuestro corazón	this poet, whose every word will remain engraved on our hearts
el césped, por toda cuya superficie crecían malas hierbas	the lawn, over all of whose surface weeds were growing
esta ciudad, de la que conozco todas las iglesias	this city, all of whose churches I know
estas novelas, todas las cuales he leído	these novels, all of which I have read

estos niños, los padres de todos los cuales yo conozco	these children, all of whose parents I know
estas páginas, escritas todas ellas en japonés	these pages, all of which are written in Japanese
el palacio, del que no hay habitación que yo no haya visitado	the palace, all of whose rooms I have visited

(1) Important: one says *todos los profesores estamos contentos* or *los profesores estamos todos contentos* 'all of us teachers are pleased'/'we teachers are all pleased', and *todos* (*nosotros*) *estamos contentos* 'we're all pleased', but **not** **todos nosotros los profesores estamos contentos*. Note also *todas las tres chicas* 'all three girls', not **todas tres chicas*.

(2) *Cada* is 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 (s)he comes out with some new nonsense', *tres gotas cada cuatro horas* 'three drops every four hours'.

(3) Moliner, II, 1330, notes that *al . . .* is more elegant than *todos los . . .* to indicate rate or quantity per period of time in sentences like: *se fuma cuatro paquetes al día* '(s)he smokes four packets/US packs a day', *lee un par de novelas a la semana* '(s)he reads a couple of novels a week', etc.

(4) *Cuanto* may be used to translate 'absolutely every': *no es cosa de obligar a leer cuanto libro se ha escrito* (ES, Arg., interview) 'it's not a question of obliging people to read every book that was ever written'.

Cuanto or *todo cuanto* may also mean 'absolutely everything': *heredó de él una tremenda bronca a* (*todo*) *cuanto sonara a autoridad* (LS, Ch., in Spain *bronca* means 'row'/'argument' and *rabia* would be used here) 'he inherited from him a tremendous rage against everything that sounded like authority', . . . *quejándose de cuanto hay* . . . (*Excélsior*, Mex.) 'complaining about everything that exists'.

(5) After a neuter *todo*, Spanish usually makes the verb *ser* (and one or two others) agree with a following plural noun: *con nuestro nuevo plan de ahorros, todo* ***son*** *ventajas* 'with our new savings plan it's all advantages'. See 2.3.3.

(6) *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'.

(7) *Todo el mundo* (singular agreement) is a set phrase meaning 'everybody': *todo el mundo los conoce* 'everyone knows them'.

(8) *Todo* followed by the indefinite article often translates 'a whole . . .': *se comió toda una tarta de melocotones* '(s)he ate a whole peach tart', *hubo toda una serie de malentendidos* 'there was a whole series of misunderstandings'.

10.18 ***Varios*: adjective and pronoun, marked for number and gender**

(**a**) 'Several', in which case it normally – but not always – precedes the noun: *en varias partes del país* 'in several parts of the country', *mis motivos son varios* 'my motives are various', *los aspectos varios de la cuestión* (literary: from Moliner, II, 1442) 'the several (different) aspects of the question'.

(**b**) 'Various', 'varied', in which case it can also follow or precede the noun. When used with *hay* or *ser* it precedes the noun:

flores de varios colores/de colores varios (the second option is more literary)	flowers of various colours
La fauna de esta zona es muy varia/variada	The fauna of this zone is very varied
tapas varias	selection of tapas (snacks)

(c) Translating 'various': *en diversas ocasiones* 'on various occasions', *en diferentes puntos de los Andes* 'in various places in the Andes'.

11 Numerals

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- Numbers 1 to a billion (Section 11.1)
- Gender of numbers (Section 11.2)
- Agreement of *uno* and *cientos* (Section 11.3)
- Millions and billions (Section 11.4)
- *Un* or *uno*? (Section 11.5)
- *Cien* or *ciento*? (Section 11.6)
- Percentages (Section 11.7)
- 'Score', 'dozen', etc. (Section 11.8)
- Fractions (Section 11.10)
- Ordinal numbers (first, second, third, etc.) (Section 11.12)
- Rules for writing numbers (Section 11.16)
- Phone numbers (11.17)

Spanish numerals are simple and regular, although this makes the three unexpected forms *quinientos* 500 (not **cinco cientos*), *setecientos* 700 (not **sietecientos*) and *novecientos* 900 (not **nuevecientos*) easy to forget. Remember also that 16–29 are rather arbitrarily written as one word (*dieciséis*, *veintidós*, etc.) whereas other tens plus units, i.e. 31– 99, are joined by *y*: *treinta y uno*, *ochenta y seis*, etc.

11.1 Cardinal numbers: forms

Spanish cardinal numerals (the numbers used for counting) do not change their form, except for *uno* 'one' and *-cientos* 'hundreds', which agree in gender with the thing counted:

0 *cero*
1 *uno/una*
2 *dos*
3 *tres*
4 *cuatro*
5 *cinco*
6 *seis*
7 *siete*
8 *ocho*
9 *nueve*
10 *diez*
11 *once*
12 *doce*
13 *trece*
14 *catorce*
15 *quince*
16 *dieciséis*
17 *diecisiete*
18 *dieciocho*
19 *diecinueve*
20 *veinte*
21 *veintiuno/a/ veintiún*
22 *veintidós*
23 *veintitrés*
24 *veinticuatro*
25 *veinticinco*
26 *veintiséis*
27 *veintisiete*
28 *veintiocho*
29 *veintinueve*
30 *treinta*
31 *treinta y uno/ una/un*
32 *treinta y dos*
40 *cuarenta*
41 *cuarenta y uno/una/un*
50 *cincuenta*
60 *sesenta*
70 *setenta*
80 *ochenta*
90 *noventa*
100 *cien/ciento*
101 *ciento uno/una/un*
102 *ciento dos*

185 *ciento ochenta y cinco*
200 *doscientos/doscientas*
205 *doscientos cinco/ doscientas cinco*
300 *trescientos/trescientas*
357 *trescientos/as cincuenta y siete*
400 *cuatrocientos/ cuatrocientas*
500 ***quinientos/quinientas***
600 *seiscientos/seiscientas*
700 ***setecientos/setecientas***
800 *ochocientos/ochocientas*
900 ***novecientos/novecientas***
1000 *mil*
1001 see note 5
1006 *mil seis*
1107 *mil ciento siete*
1998 *mil novecientos/as noventa y ocho*
2022 *dos mil veintidós*
5000 *cinco mil*
11.000 *once mil*

500.014 *quinientos/as mil catorce*

1.000.000 *un millón*

936.357 *novecientos/as treinta y seis mil trescientos/as cincuenta y siete*

100.000.000 *cien millones*

$1.000.000 un millón de dólares (for the use of *de* see 11.4a)
7.678.456 *libras*: *siete millones seiscient**a**s setenta y ocho mil cuatrocient**a**s cincuenta y seis libras*
1.000.000.000 *mil millones* 1.000.000.000.000 *un billón* (see 11.4b)

(1) Important: 16–29 are written as one word, as are 200, 300, 400, 500, 600, 700, 800 and 900. Forms like *diez y seis* for *dieciséis* are old-fashioned. '*Nuevecientos*' for *novecientos* is heard in rural speech in some countries.

The numbers 31 to 99 are often written as one word in Chile *cuarentaiocho* for *cuarenta y ocho*, *sesentaisiete* for *sesenta y siete*; the daily newspaper *El Mercurio* of Santiago adopts this spelling. The Academy (*NGLE* 21.2k) prefers the forms with *y*. The Academy condemns omission of the *a*, as in ?*cuarentiocho*, ?*sesentisiete*, even though this is common in casual speech in some countries, less so in Spain.

(2) Important: *uno* is not used before *ciento* or *mil*: *una pareja de ratas es capaz de procrear más de ciento veinte crías por año* 'a pair of rats is capable of producing more than 120 offspring per year', *más de mil colegios equipados con televisores en color* 'more than one thousand schools equipped with colour TV sets'. But *un* is used to distinguish between different meanings, as in *trescientos/as **un** mil ochenta y cuatro 301.084* and *trescientos/as mil ochenta y cuatro 300.084.* However, the *NGLE* reports that *un mil* . . . is common in the media in Latin America, cf. *pagamos por ello un mil trece millones de dólares* (*Excélsior*, Mex. quoted *NGLE* 21.3e) 'we paid 1013 million dollars for it', Spain *mil trece millones* . . . .

(3) Important: the Academy (DPD, 462) now recommends separating every three decimal places by a space: *8 567 876* = the English 8,567,876. Spaces are used in Cuba: *los más de 1 200 000 niños y niñas que integran la Organización de Pionerosí* (*Juventud Rebelde*, Cu.) 'the more than 1,200,000 boys and girls belonging to the Pioneers Organization'. Years, street numbers, and zip codes should not contain spaces: *2015*, *Avenida Maragall 3230 Madrid.*

However, a full stop (US 'period') is used in Spain and most South-American countries to separate thousands: *19.000 dólares = $19,000*. Typists sometimes write years with a point, e.g. 1.998, but the grammarians disapprove. The Academy states that a comma should be used to separate decimals: *3,45* (pronounced *tres coma cuarenta y cinco*, not '*tres coma cuatro cinco*') = British and American 'three point four five'. This system is in general use in Spain and south of Panama.

To confuse matters more, Mexico, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and the Central-American countries generally, but not Cuba, use the system of the English-speaking world, i.e. 1.25, pronounced *uno punto veinticinco* for decimals and commas to separate thousands: *5,000 cinco mil.*

(4) 1001 is theoretically *mil uno* and this form is used when counting and no noun follows. Seco (1998), 446, notes that *mil **y** uno* comes from the famous book *Las mil y una noches* 'One Thousand and One Nights' and is correct only in the vague sense of 'a lot': *tengo mil y una cosas que hacer* 'I've got a thousand and one things to do', *las mil y una aplicaciones domóticas permiten descansar al propietario* (*El País*, Sp.) 'the innumerable electronic household appliances allow the owner to rest'. However, *mil y uno/a* is usual before nouns: *mil y un euros* '1001 euros', *las mil y una sonrisas de Robin Williams* (*Excélsior*, Mex.) 'the 1001 smiles of Robin Williams'. Forms like *mil un euros* are found in formal writing.

(5) Certain forms ending in *-ón* are used, with a faint pejorative meaning, 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'. Forms ending in *-añero* are merely descriptive, e.g. *un quinceañero* 'a fifteen-year-old boy', *una veinteañera* (CMG, Sp.) 'a twenty-year-old woman'.

(6) *El País*'s *Libro de estilo* 2014, 2.1.9, says that *el/la joven* or *el/la adolescente* is a person aged between 13 and 18, so they are close equivalents of our 'teenager'.

(7) Roman numerals are written with centuries: *el siglo XXI* = *el siglo veintiuno*, although ordinary numerals are increasingly seen.

(8) Traditionally the word 'or' – *o* – was written with an accent between digits to avoid confusion with zero. The Academy now rules that one should write 5 o 6, not 5 ó 6. See 37.2.

(9) English-speakers should not assume that signs like £, $ or € are clear to Spanish-speakers everywhere. Write *50 dólares*, *179 libras*, *mil euros* not *$50*, *£179*. *€1000.*

(10) For *otros dos* . . . versus *dos otros* . . . see 10.13 note 2.

11.2 Gender of numbers

Numbers are masculine, unlike the letters of the alphabet, which are feminine:

Yo puse un siete, no un nueve	I put a 7, not a 9
Los dos ochos del anuncio giraban velozmente en sentido contrario (CMG, Sp.)	The two 8s on the advertisement were spinning rapidly in opposite directions
un cinco de bastos	a five of clubs
Tú eres el cuatro	You're number four

This is also true of *cientos* and *miles* when used as nouns (i.e. when followed by *de*):

los miles de víctimas de los tifones	the thousands of victims of the typhoons
los escasos cientos de personas que asistían a la manifestación	the few hundred persons present at the demonstration

(1) In informal styles *miles de* is very often made feminine before feminine nouns: *las miles de aves* (*La Vanguardia*, Sp.) 'the thousands of birds', *las miles de víctimas* (*El Economista*, Mex.) 'the thousands of victims'. Seco (1998), 297, says *las miles* is 'abnormal' and the Academy disapproves of it, but the construction is frequently heard and seen.

11.3 Agreement of *uno* and *cientos*

Important: *uno* and *cientos* (but not *ciento*/*cien*) agree in gender with the noun counted. Foreign students constantly forget to make *cientos* agree:

un peso/una libra	one peso/one pound
veintiuna casas	twenty-one houses
quinientos dólares	five hundred dollars
setecientas mujeres	seven hundred women
aprobaron trescientos un alumnos	301 students passed
en la página quinientas catorce	on page 514
Yo duermo en la cuatrocientas (*habitación* omitted)	I'm sleeping in (room) 400

(1) Combinations of tens plus one and thousands (21,000, 31,000, 41,000, etc.) are problematic. Logically one should say *veintiun**a** mil mujeres* '21,000 women' since the nouns are feminine and *mil* is an adjective: *se han visto afectadas treinta y una mil personas* 'thirty-one thousand people have been affected' (TVE broadcast). However, forms like *veintiún mil pesetas*, *treinta y un mil mujeres*

'31,000 women', etc., are in common use, and many speakers do not accept *veintiuna/treinta y una mil*. Seco (1998), 445, notes that the masculine is in fact the traditional form and the Academy approves of both.

When thousands are multiplied by hundreds the expected gender agreement must be used: *doscient**as** mil mujeres* '200,000 women', never **doscientos mil mujeres*.

11.4 Millions, billions and trillions

(**a**) **Important**: *millón*, *billón* and the little used *trillón* are masculine nouns and are connected by *de* to the following noun or noun phrase: *visitarían para fin de año más de 13 millones de turistas el DF* (*Excélsior*, Mex.) '13 million tourists will probably visit Mexico City by end of the year' (*DF* = *Distrito Federal*, but see note 3).

(**b**) **Important**: the Hispanic *billón* and *trillón* do not have the values they have in the USA and in most other places in the English-speaking world:

Spain and Latin America	USA, Britain, etc.
un millón = 1.000.000	same
mil millones = 1.000.000.000 (see note 2)	one billion (a thousand million)
un billón =1.000.000.000.000 (10^{12})	one trillion (a million million)
un trillón = un millón de billones (10^{18})	a million trillion

The left-hand column shows the values used throughout the Hispanic world, but it makes sense to enquire which system is being used when talking about national debts or stars, galaxies, atoms, etc. In Britain 'billion' and 'trillion' had their Hispanic values until the official adoption of the US system in 1974, and some people are still confused about their exact meaning.

(1) The phrase *un millón/billón/trillón de* is singular, so a following verb or noun should agree accordingly: *el millón y medio restante **fue** invertido . . .* 'the remaining million and a half were/was invested . . .'.

'A million and one' is *un millón y uno/una*, and *y* is used whenever a single number-word follows: *un millón y cien*, *tres millones y mil*, but *un millón doscientos mil* = 'one million two hundred thousand'.

(2) The term *un millardo* has been proposed for the English-speaking world's billion (a thousand million) but it seems not to have caught on outside Venezuela.

(3) Mexico City's name was officially changed in January 2016 from *Distrito Federal* to *la Ciudad de México*, often abbreviated to *CDMX*.

11.5 *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:

un tigre, dos tigres, tres tigres	one tiger, two tigers, three tigers (a tongue-twister)
veintiún mil hombres	21,000 men
veintiún mil mujeres (see 11.3 note 1)	21,000 women
un águila, veintiún armas, treinta y un hachas	one eagle, 21 weapons, 31 axes

In the following examples the final vowel is retained since no noun follows the number: *no hay más que veintiun**o*** 'there are only twenty-one', *párrafo ciento uno* 'paragraph 101', *Inglaterra, país tradicional de los fantasmas, ve uno nuevo por sus calles* 'England, the traditional land of ghosts, is witnessing a new one in its streets'.

11.6 *Cien* or *ciento*?

Ciento is shortened to *cien* before another numeral which it multiplies, or before a noun or noun phrase:

cien mil bolívares	100,000 bolivares
cien millones	100 million
la iniciativa de eliminar cien de los 500 diputados (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	the proposal to remove 100 of the 500 deputies

but

ciento once	one hundred and eleven
en la página ciento dieciocho	on page one hundred and eighteen

(1) The old rule was that *ciento* should be used when the number stands alone: —*¿Cuántos son?* —*Ciento* '"How many are there?" '"A hundred"'. This rule is obsolete everywhere, so the answer is now *cien.* Further examples: *yo vivo en el cien* 'I live in number 100', *pues faltan cien o sobran cincuenta* (AM, Mex., dialogue) 'well, there are either a hundred missing or fifty too many'. However, *ciento* is still used in percentages: see next section.

11.7 Expression of percentages

Por ciento is recommended by the Academy (*NGLE* 21.2m) and is usual in written language, though *por cien* is common in speech. *Cien por cien* is often used for 'completely', 'absolutely', although *ciento por ciento* is also found:

el cuarenta y tres por ciento	forty-three per cent
tanto por ciento	so much per cent
El PCE sólo obtuvo el 8 y pico por ciento de los votos (*El País*, Sp.)	The Spanish Communist Party only obtained just over 8% of the votes
Se pronostica 60 por ciento de intervalos de chubascos en Chiapas y Oaxaca (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	There is a 60% forecast of periods of showers in Chiapas and Oaxaca
. . . la seguridad, cien por cien, de que los vertidos son inocuos (*El País*, Sp.)	. . . the hundred-per-cent guarantee that the waste matter is harmless
Estoy ciento por ciento tranquilo por la investigación (interview, *La Jornada*, Mex.)	I'm 100% reassured by the investigation
Promete compromiso y profesionalidad al ciento por ciento (*El País*, Sp.)	He promises 100% commitment and professionalism

(1) For the use of *el* with percentages see 11.11.

11.8 'Score', 'dozen', etc. (collective numerals)

There is a series of collective numerals, cf. our 'score', sometimes used to express approximate quantities:

un par de veces a couple of times
una decena about ten
una docena a dozen (often approximate, used less than in English)
una veintena a score/about twenty
una cuarentena about forty/quarantine
una cincuentena about fifty
un centenar about a hundred
un millar about a thousand

(1) Important: like all collective nouns, collective numerals are often treated as singular: *una veintena de casas se ordenab**a** formando una calle frente al río* (LS, Ch.) 'a score of houses were laid out to form a street in front of the river', *lo esperab**a** una treintena de hombres con rifles* (ES, Mex.) 'about thirty men with rifles were waiting for him'. See 2.3.1 for further remarks on collective nouns.

(2) *Cuatro* is much used colloquially in Spain and Mexico, and no doubt elsewhere, to mean 'a couple'/'a handful': *no hay más que cuatro gatos* 'there are only a couple of people around' (lit. '. . . only four cats'), *no son más que cuatro desgraciados los que ponen las pegatinas fascistas* 'it's only a handful of wretches who put up fascist stickers'.

(3) *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*.

(4) An informal way of expressing 'slightly above' is by using *y pico*, as in *el piso veintipico* (MVM, Sp.) 'flat/apartment twenty-something', *treinta y pico* 'thirty and a bit'. Note also *son las cinco y pico* 'it's just after/gone five o'clock'.

11.9 Mathematical expressions

Dos y (or *dos más*) *tres son cinco* — Two plus three equals five
Dos por tres son seis — Two times three equals six
Ocho dividido por dos son cuatro (or *ocho entre dos . . .*) — Eight divided by two is four
Once menos nueve son dos — Eleven minus nine equals two
Tres es la raíz cuadrada de nueve — Three is the square root of nine
Nueve es el cuadrado de tres — Nine is three squared
Forma un cuadrado de diez metros — It's ten metres square
dos metros cuadrados — two square metres
tres metros cúbicos — three cubic metres
menos veinte — minus twenty

The division sign is a colon, e.g. *3:6 = 0,5* (*tres dividido por seis son cero coma cinco*) '3/6 = 0.5' (*0.5 cero punto cinco* in Mexico).

11.10 Fractions

There are nouns to express some lower fractions, e.g. *la/una mitad* 'the/a half', *el/un tercio* 'the/a third', *dos tercios* 'two-thirds', *el/un cuarto* 'the/a quarter'.

From 'fifth' to 'tenth' the masculine ordinal numeral can be used: *un quinto/sexto/séptimo/octavo/noveno/décimo* 'a fifth/sixth/seventh/eighth/ninth/tenth', but this is more typical of mathematical, technical or sporting language although it is heard also in educated speech: *ganó por tres quintos de segundo* '(s)he won by three-fifths of a second'.

Everyday language uses the forms *quinta parte*, *sexta parte*, *séptima parte*, etc., although usage is fickle in a few cases and the *parte* may be dropped. Note *tengo unas décimas de fiebre* 'I've got a

couple of tenths of a degree of fever', *unas décimas de segundo después* 'a few tenths of a second later'. *Un décimo* is a tenth share in a Spanish national lottery ticket. *La tercera parte* is usual in non-mathematical speech for *el tercio*. Examples:

La mitad se salvó	Half were saved
un cuarto (*de*) *kilo*	a quarter (of a) kilo
Un tercio/La tercera parte de los españoles piensa(*n*) *que . . .*	A third of Spaniards think that . . .
Alaska y Venezuela sólo nos aseguran las dos terceras partes de ese suministro (CF, Mex., dialogue)	Alaska and Venezuela only guarantee us two-thirds of that supply

Complicated fractions like 'four twenty-sevenths' are usually nowadays expressed as decimals. If fractions must be used, the usual practice in Spain is to use the ordinary cardinal numbers: '1/20th' = *la veinte parte*, '1/90th' = *la noventa parte*, '1/53rd' = *la cincuenta y tres parte*. Forms like *la vigésima parte* '1/20th', *la nonagésima parte* '1/90th', *la quincuagésima tercera parte* '1/53rd ', are avoided in all but formal language.

Masculine ordinal forms can be used for high fractions: *un milésimo de litro* 'a thousandth of a litre/liter'. Ordinals with *parte* are also often used for hundredths, thousandths, millionths and billionths: *la centésima/milésima/millonésima parte*, *tres doscentésimas* '3/200ths'; the word *parte* is often dropped.

A partir de la primera cienmilésima de segundo, el Universo empieza a cobrar un aspecto conocido (*Abc*, Sp.)	After the first one hundred-thousandth of a second the Universe begins to take on a familiar appearance
La tasa de desempleo mostró una baja marginal de una centésima (*Excélsior*, Mex.)	The unemployment rate showed a marginal decline of 100th of a point
Bolt ganó por una centésima de segundo (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	Bolt won by 100th of a second

(1) The tinier fractions can alternatively be expressed – and generally are in mathematical language – by adding the suffix *-avo* to the cardinal number: *la veinticincoava parte* '1/25th', *tres ochenta y seisavas partes* '3/86ths'. Mathematical language may use the masculine noun form, e.g. *tres ochenta y seisavos*. If two *a*'s come together when *-avo* is added, one can optionally be dropped and usually is in non-mathematical language: *treinta*(*a*)*vo* '30th'.

(2) *Medio/a/os/as* is the adjectival form for 'half': *una media docena/pinta* 'a half-dozen/half-pint'; *la mitad* is the noun 'the half'. *Cuarto* may function as an adjective or noun: *un cuarto kilo* or *un cuarto de kilo* '1/4 kilo', but always *un cuarto de hora* 'a quarter of an hour'.

(3) The optional use of *con* should be noted in this example: *cuesta ocho euros* (*con*) *cincuenta y siete* 'it costs eight euros and fifty-seven cents'.

11.11 Articles with numbers

Certain common numerical expressions, especially percentages, appear with *el* or *un*. This is particularly true when the numerical value is preceded by a preposition, and after *cumplir*, *al llegar a . . .* meaning 'to reach the age of':

Vivo en el cinco	I live in number five
Cuando George Burns cumplió los noventa años . . . (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	When George Burns reached the age of ninety

Lo dijo al llegar a los ochenta años	(S)he said it when (s)he reached eighty
. . . una reducción del 55% en el total de sentencias dictadas y un incremento del 102% en la suma de causas archivadas (*La Nación*, Arg.)	. . . a 55% drop in the number of sentences handed out and a 102% rise in the total number of shelved prosecutions
El 20 por ciento de los mexicanos dice(*n*) . . .	20% of Mexicans say . . .
un treinta por ciento de la población activa	30% of the active population

But

Ha costado entre tres mil y cinco mil euros	It cost between 3,000 and 5,000 euros
Tengo cuarenta y tres años	I'm forty-three (years old)

(1) The article is not used everywhere with percentages: *el año pasado el gasto programable representó 18.2 por ciento del PIB* (*La Jornada*, Mex. Mexico uses points and commas as in English) 'last year the predicted cost represented 18.2% of GDP', *acaba de obtener 46,4% del total de votos* (*El Nacional*, Ven.) 'he has just obtained 46.4% of the total votes'.

11.12 Ordinal numbers

11.12.1 Ordinal numerals first to tenth

These translate 'first', 'second', 'third', etc. They agree in number and gender: *el quinto libro*, *la quinta casa* 'the fifth book', 'the fifth house'. The special ordinal forms first to tenth are in everyday use, but the cardinal numbers encroach even on them in phrases like *el siglo nueve/noveno* 'the ninth century', the ordinal being considered more correct:

primer(*o*) first	*quinto* fifth	*octavo* eighth
segundo second	*sexto* sixth	*noveno* ninth
tercer(*o*) third	*séptimo/sétimo* 'seventh'	*décimo* tenth
cuarto fourth		

el tercer hombre the third man	*la tercera vez* the third time
Isabel II (*segunda*) Elizabeth II	*el siglo X* (*décimo/diez*) the tenth century
Fernando VII (*séptimo*) Ferdinand VII	

(1) *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'. For more details see 5.5b.

(2) *Séptimo* is often pronounced *sétimo* and the Academy approves of this spelling. Many people, especially in Spain, find it unacceptable.

(3) *Nono* is used for *noveno* when referring to Popes: *Pío nono* 'Pope Pius IX'.

(4) In the titles of royalty and Popes, the usual rule is that the ordinal number is used below eleven, the cardinal for numbers above ten: *Enrique V* (*Enrique Quinto*) 'Henry the Fifth', but *Juan XXIII* (*Juan Veintitrés*) 'John 23rd'.

(5) See 32.9.1 for how to say and write dates.

11.12.2 Ordinal numbers above tenth

The use of the special ordinal forms listed below is declining and they are now mainly found only in official or formal language. The forms in bold type are used for fractions in technical language: *tres doceavos* 'three-twelfths'. They are also often used as ordinal numbers in Latin America: *la doceava parte de un sexenio* (CF, Mex., dialogue) 'one twelfth of six years', and occasionally in Spain, although this is condemned by Seco (1998), 70, by the *Libro de estilo* of *El País* and by the Academy, *NGLE* 21.1d.

11th *undécimo* ***onceavo***
12th *duodécimo* ***doceavo***
13th *decimotercero* ***treceavo***
14th *decimocuarto* ***catorceavo***
15th *decimoquinto* ***quinceavo***
16th *decimosexto* ***dieciseisavo***
17th *decimoséptimo* ***diecisieteavo***
18th *decimoctavo* ***dieciochavo***
19th *decimonoveno/decimonono* ***diecinueveavo***
20th *vigésimo* ***veinteavo***
21th *vigésimo/a primero/a*
25th *vigésimo/a quinto/a* etc. ***veinticincoavo***
30th *trigésimo* ***treinta(a)vo***
36th *trigésimo/a sexto/a* ***treintiseisavo***
40th *cuadragésimo* ***cuarenta(a)vo***
50th *quincuagésimo* ***cincuenta(a)vo***
60th *sexagésimo* ***sesenta(a)vo***
70th *septuagésimo* ***setenta(a)vo***
80th *octogésimo* ***ochenta(a)vo***
90th *nonagésimo* ***noventa(a)vo***
100th *centésimo* (in common use) ***centavo***
200th *ducentésimo*
300th *tricentésimo*
400th *cuadringentésimo*
500th *quingentésimo*
600th *sexcentésimo*
700th *septingentésimo*
800th *octingentésimo*
900th *noningentésimo*
1000th *milésimo* (in common use)
2000th *dosmilésimo*
400th *cuatrocientosmilésimo*
1,000,000th *millonésimo*

(1) Important: in informal styles, written and spoken, these ordinal forms over tenth are avoided and the ordinary cardinal numbers are used, e.g. *conmemoran dieciocho aniversario de la muerte de Myrna Mack Chang* (*La Hora*, Guat.) '18th anniversary of death of Myrna M. Chang commemorated', *la trescientas cincuenta reunión del comité* 'the 350th meeting of the committee', *faltaban quince días para mi cincuenta cumpleaños* (CMG, Sp., dialogue) 'there were fifteen days to go to my fiftieth birthday', *el tren de alta velocidad español está a punto de contabilizar su pasajero medio millón* (*El País*, Sp., instead of *quinientosmilésimo pasajero*) 'the Spanish High Speed Train (*AVE*) is about to get (lit. 'enter in its accounts') its 500,000th passenger'. Some newspapers, e.g. *La Nación* of Argentina and *El Mercurio* of Chile print the ordinal forms, e.g. *el 65o* [*sexagésimo quinto*] *aniversario*, others, e.g. *La Jornada* of Mexico and *El País* of Spain use the cardinal forms, i.e. *el 65* [*sesenta y cinco*] *aniversario.*

(2) *Decimoprimero*, *decimosegundo*, for *undécimo*, *duodécimo*, were traditionally condemned, but the Academy now accepts them (*NGLE* 21.4i) although *El País* does not.

(3) Forms like *décimo tercero*, *décimo cuarto* are nowadays old-fashioned, although *El País* accepts them. Joined forms like *vigesimoquinto/a*, *vigesimoséptimo/a*, etc. are also common for '21st' to '29th'. If the words are separated, both elements should agree in gender and number: *la vigésima sexta respuesta* or *la vigesimosexta respuesta* 'the twenty-sixth reply'.

(4) For the first of a month one can say either *el uno de . . .* or *el primero de . . .* the latter being more common in Latin America but often heard in Spain.

11.12.3 Position of ordinal numbers

They usually precede:

en el tercer capítulo/en el capítulo tercero	in the third chapter
la compleja relación entre ciencia y política bajo el Tercer Reich (*El País*, Sp.)	the complex relationship between science and politics under the Third Reich
por la enésima vez	for the umpteenth time
los tres primeros párrafos/párrafos primeros	the first three paragraphs

11.13 Distribution

cada cinco meses	every five months
Cada uno paga lo suyo	Each pays his share
Di mil pesos a cada uno de ellos	I gave 1000 pesos to each of them
Los actores entraban de dos en dos	The actors came in two by two
Subió las escaleras de tres en tres (from *NGLE* 21.8c)	(S)he went up the stairs three steps at a time
Traían sendos ramilletes de flores (literary style, informally *cada uno traía un ramillete*)	Each bore a bouquet of flowers/Each one was carrying a bouquet
Uno de sus empleados nos ofrecía sendas copas de vino (JV, Mex.)	One of his employees offered each of us a glass of wine

(1) The *NGLE* notes that *sendos* 'each'/'one each' is dying out everywhere, but it is quite often seen in Latin-American newspapers.

11.14 Single, double, treble, etc.

un billete (Lat.-Am. *boleto*) *de ida*	a one-way ticket
una habitación individual	a single room
todos y cada uno de los problemas	every single problem
con una sola/única excepción	with a single exception
ni uno solo	not a single one
El aire contiene el doble de óxido de nitrógeno que en Washington (*Granma*, Cu.)	The air contains twice more nitrous oxide than in Washington
Mi sueldo es el doble del suyo	My salary is double his
el doble acristalamiento	double glazing
una cama de matrimonio	double bed
Duplicaron la suma	They doubled the sum
Esta cantidad es el triple de esa/ésa	This quantity is triple that

11.15 Dimensions and other numerical expressions

Este cuarto mide 2,5 (*dos coma cinco*) *por 3,75* (*tres coma setenta y cinco*)	This room measures 2.5 by 3.75
El área es de tres metros cuadrados	The area is three square metres
Forma un cuadrado de dos metros	It's two metres/meters square
mil centímetros cúbicos	1000 cc

El cable tiene cien metros de largo/de longitud	The cable's 100m long
Tiene cinco metros de hondo/ancho	It's five metres/meters deep/wide
un motor de ocho caballos	an 8-horsepower engine
un motor de dos tiempos	a two-stroke engine
un ángulo de treinta grados	a 30-degree angle
Forma un ángulo recto	It makes a right-angle
Debe de haber cinco bajo cero	It must be five degrees below zero
números pares/impares/primos	even/odd/prime numbers
dos nueveavos dividido por tres sieteavos (see 11.12.2 for discussion of *-avo*)	two-ninths divided by three-sevenths
diez elevado al cubo/sexto/noveno	ten to the third/sixth/ninth (10^3, 10^6, 10^9)

11.16 Numerals: rules for writing

There is no universal agreement about the rules for writing numbers, but the following recommendations are abridged, with a few additions, from the Academy's *Diccionario panhispánico de dudas* and apply to non-technical works.

Digits are used:

(**a**) for all numbers that consist of four or more digits; *56 982*, *5 073*, *2019*, etc.

(**b**) for all numbers that include a decimal value: *2,8 kilos*, *21,5 kilómetros*;

(**c**) for percentages above 10: *11 por ciento*, *67,5 por ciento*;

(**d**) for numbers preceded or followed by an abbreviated unit or a symbol: *64km* (*sesenta y cuatro kilómetros*), *24°* (*veinticuatro grados*), *45 págs.* (*cuarenta y cinco páginas*), *€90* (*noventa euros*).

(**e**) for dates: *el 23 de marzo de 2023*; see 36.9 for more on the format of dates. Numbers are used for years (*1998*, *2005*) but not for decades: *los años noventa* 'the nineties';

(**f**) when a number follows a noun and expresses a value in a series (this includes addresses): *Avenida de la Libertad 7, 2º izquierda* '7 Liberty Avenue, second floor apartment, left-hand door', *N-342* 'National Highway 342', *habitación 378* 'room 378'.

Letters are used:

(**a**) for numbers that can be written with one word: *quince*, *diecisiete*, *veinticuatro*, *doscientos*, etc.;

(b) for round numbers expressible in two words: *tres mil*, *cien millones*;

(**c**) for numbers up to 99 joined by *y*: *setenta y ocho*, *noventa y nueve*;

(**d**) for all approximate numbers: *unos setenta mil dólares* 'about 70,000 dollars', ¡*te lo he dicho cien veces*!, 'I've told you a hundred times!', *tengo mil y una cosas que hacer* 'I've got a thousand and one things to do';

(**e**) for numbers that are quoted as spoken by someone: *me dijo que quería comprar setecientos cincuenta* '(s)he told me (s)he wanted to buy seven hundred and fifty';

(**f**) for telling the time other than in timetables: *llegó a las diez y media/a las cuatro cuarenta y cinco* '(s)he arrived at 11.30'/'at 4.45'.

(1) *El País* says in its *Libro de estilo* 2014, 11.10, that one should not begin a sentence with a number except in headlines and abbreviated messages. It forbids its journalists to open with *Diez personas resultaron heridas . . .*' 'Ten persons were injured . . .'; better *Un total de diez personas resultaron heridas*. This is not observed everywhere: *Tres personas murieron y 22 quedaron heridas . . .* (*El Comercio*, Pe.).

11.17 Telephone numbers

The *Libro de estilo* of *El País*, 2014, 11.24, recommends that telephone numbers should be expressed by pairs: 54 06 72, spoken as *cincuenta y cuatro – cero seis – setenta y dos*, and this is the usual way that phone numbers are said in Spanish. If the number of figures is uneven, the first group is written, and may be said, as a combination of hundreds: *542 67 22*, spoken as *quinientos cuarenta y dos – sesenta y siete – veintidós*, or, usually, *cinco – cuarenta y dos – sesenta y siete – veintidós*. Extensions are sometimes written in brackets: 033 527 76 89 (19). Phone numbers are often written with hyphens separating the figures that are spoken as single numbers.

However, there is no objection to saying phone numbers as separate figures – *siete dos cuatro uno tres ocho nueve* – 7241389 – which is easier for foreigners.

12 Personal pronouns, subject

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- Forms of personal subject pronouns (Section 12.1)
- Use of subject pronouns (Section 12.2)
- Formal and informal modes of address (*tú*, *vos* and *usted*(*es*)) (Section 12.3)
- *Nosotros* (Section 12.4)
- Pronouns and agreement (Section 12.5)

This chapter deals with the Spanish pronouns *yo*, *tú* and *vos*, *usted*, *él*, *ella*, *nosotros/as*, *vosotros/as*, *ustedes*, and *ellos*/*ellas*. These are the pronouns used as the subject of verbs, as in *yo canto* 'I sing', *usted habla* 'you're speaking'. However, they are used much less than their English equivalents for the reasons explained at 12.2.1.

Object pronouns are discussed in Chapter 14. The use of the third-person object pronouns *le/les* and *lo/la/los/las* is discussed separately in Chapter 15. For possessive adjectives and pronouns, see Chapter 9. For the pronoun *se* and pronominal verbs (see Glossary), see Chapters 30 and 32.

12.1 Classification and forms

'Subject' pronouns are used to emphasize the subject of a verb: *yo hablo*, '*I* am talking', *él duerme* '*he* is sleeping'. See 12.2.1 for details about their use.

Personal Pronouns, Subject

SINGULAR

Person			Remarks
1st	*yo*	I	
2nd	*tú* (note accent!)	you	informal: see 12.3.2
	vos	you	informal. Only in some Lat. Am. countries. see 12.3.1
	usted	you	formal: see 12.3.2
3rd masc.	*él* (note accent!)	he, it	see 12.2.1–2
3rd fem.	*ella*	she, it	see 12.2.1–2

PLURAL

1st masc.	*nosotros*	we	see 12.4
1st fem.	*nosotras*	we	see 12.4
2nd masc.	*vosotros*	you	informal, Spain only: see 12.3.3
2nd fem.	*vosotras*	you	informal, Spain only: see 12.3.3
2nd formal	*ustedes*	you	formal in Spain; formal or familiar in Lat. Am. See 12.3.3
3rd masc.	*ellos*	they	see 12.2.1–2
3rd fem.	*ellas*	they	see 12.2.1–2

(1) For the third-person neuter pronoun *ello* see 8.3.

12.2 Use of subject pronouns

12.2.1 Emphasis and contrast

Important: the identity of the subject of a Spanish verb is usually obvious from the verb's ending: *habl**o*** 'I speak', *habl**ó*** 'he/she/you/it spoke', *vend**imos*** 'we sold', *sal**ieron*** 'they/you (*ustedes*) went out', etc. The forms *yo/tú/él/ella/usted*(*es*)*/ellos/ellas* are therefore usually only required for emphasis or contrast.

It is a bad mistake, common among English speakers, to use Spanish subject pronouns unnecessarily. ***Yo me vestí, y después yo fui a recoger a mi hijo, pero yo llegué tarde* is completely unacceptable for 'I got dressed, then I went to pick up my son, but I arrived late'. All the *yo*s must be deleted except, perhaps, the first, and then only if it is needed for one of the reasons given in this section. The subject pronouns are used only:

(**a**) **when the pronoun appears without a verb:**

—¿Quién ha venido? —Ellos	'Who's come?' 'They have/Them'
—¿Quién lo ha hecho? —Nosotros/as	'Who did it?' 'We did'
—¿Quién es? —Yo	'Who is it?' 'Me'

(**b**) **When there is a change of subject, not necessarily within the same sentence, and the subjects are contrasted with one another:**

Great confusion is caused by English speakers who ignore this rule. *Mi hermana es médica y ella nunca está en casa* means 'my sister's a doctor and ***she*** (i.e. someone else) is never at home', whereas '. . . *y nunca está en casa* refers to my sister.

Tú eres listo, pero ella es genial	You're clever but she's a genius
Mi mujer trabaja y yo me quedo en casa con los niños	My wife works and I stay at home with the children
¿Mami le cuenta a Dios que Mita no va a misa y que yo me porto mal? (MP, Arg., dialogue)	Does Mummy tell God that Mita doesn't go to Mass and that I misbehave?
Él estaba con unos amigos y yo con un cliente (GZ, Mex., dialogue)	He was with some friends and I was with a customer

(**c**) To emphasize the subject:

Pues yo no quiero salir	Well *I* don't want to go out (i.e. even if you do)
Tú haz lo que te dé la gana	*You* do whatever you like (implies 'I don't care')
Ríete de mí, pero tú vas a llegar muy alto (ES, Mex., dialogue)	Laugh at me (if you like), but *you're* going to go a long way (lit. 'very high')

(**d**) 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', *yo estaba trabajando* 'I was working'. However, in most cases context makes the meaning clear and the pronoun is not needed.

(**e**) In the phrases *soy yo* 'it's me', *eres tú* 'it's you' (Arg. *sos vos*), *es él/ella/usted* 'it's him/her/you', *somos nosotros/nosotras* 'it's us', *sois vosotros/vosotras* 'it's you', *son ellos/ellas/ustedes* 'it's them/you'.

(1) Important: English can emphasize almost any word simply by pronouncing it louder, e.g. 'you need to talk to **her** not to her **brother**', but this use of loudness or stress usually produces

an unfortunate effect in Spanish. The latter uses other devices, e.g. cleft sentences (*es con ella con la que deberías hablar, no con su hermano*; see 41.3) or changes of word order: *deberías hablar con ella, no con su hermano*.

Further examples (bold type in English shows stress and loudness): 'where are **you** going?' *¿tú adónde vas?/¿adónde vas tú?*', 'I'm talking to **you**' *contigo es con quien estoy hablando/te estoy hablando a ti*, 'what's **he** doing?' *¿y él qué está haciendo?/¿qué está haciendo él?*, '**you're** not coming with **us**' *con nosotros no vienes/tú con nosotros no vienes*'. See 42.1.2 for more remarks on this subject.

12.2.2 Subject pronouns for inanimate nouns

Él/ella/ellos/ellas may translate 'it' or 'they' when applied to non-living things, especially after prepositions: *no fuera de la casa sino dentro de ella* 'not outside the house but in it', *me gusta tu sombrero pero estarías mejor sin él* 'I like your hat, but you'd be better without it'. But they are taken to stand for human beings when they are used as the subject of a verb. One cannot therefore shorten *el viento sopla* 'the wind's blowing' to *él sopla*, which means '(s)he's blowing'; *sopla* means '*it's* blowing'. Nor can one say **compré una mesa y un sillón. Él tiene tapizado de cuero y ella es de diseño italiano* for *el sillón tiene . . . y la mesa es de . . .* 'I bought a table and an armchair. The chair is leather-covered and the table is of Italian design' (example from *GDLE* 19.2.2).

Subject pronouns are, however, sometimes used in Latin America for a non-living subject where Peninsular speakers would use either no pronoun at all or an appropriate form of *este/éste* 'this'/'the latter' or *ese/aquel* (or *ése/aquél*) 'the former':

La "oposición" ha desaparecido de la radio, *de la televisión y de la prensa diaria . . .* ***Ella** subsiste, mínima, hostigada,* *desde las columnas de todos* *los periódicos* (MVLl, Pe.)	The 'opposition' has vanished from radio, television and the daily press. It operates, minimal and harassed, from the opinion columns of all the newspapers

12.3 Formal and informal modes of address

12.3.1 *Voseo*

In Spain *vos* for 'you' is archaic, but it is used instead of *tú* in many parts of Latin America. *Vos* for *tú* is universal in speech and writing in Argentina and students of this variety should use it; but see 20.12.5 for the subjunctive forms used with *vos*. It is accepted in most social circles in Uruguay, Paraguay, Eastern Bolivia and in most of Central America including the extreme south of Mexico: in Costa Rica, for example, *tú* is considered unnatural. It occurs locally in Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela and is possibly spreading there, but it may be considered 'lower-class' or provincial, although attitudes vary locally. In Chile it is shunned by the middle and upper classes. It is not usual in Peru, Panama, Cuba, central and northern Mexico and in Puerto Rico, but there are pockets of *voseo* in some of these countries.

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 learned locally. For the verb forms used in Buenos Aires see 16.7.1 note 2 and 21.2.3.

Vos was once used as a polite second-person singular pronoun in Spain and it is still used there in ritual language in official documents, in some prayers, when addressing the King on very

formal occasions, and in pseudo-archaic styles, e.g. in Buero Vallejo's play *Las meninas*. In Spain this archaic *vos* takes the normal verb endings for *vosotros*, and the possessive adjective/pronoun is *vuestro/a/os/as*.

12.3.2 *Tú* (*vos*) or *usted*?

Important: in Spain *tú* is nowadays used for persons with whom one is on first-name terms (but see note 2), i.e. between friends, fellow workers, family members, to children and animals, and in prayers. It is also much used between strangers under the age of about 40, and even the over-40s will find that young waiters or shop-workers call them *tú*. *Tú* is therefore used far more than the French *tu* or German *Du*, and it is much more common than 70 years ago

Tú (or *vos* in parts of Latin America) should not be used anywhere to persons in authority. e.g. the police, or to elderly strangers unless they encourage its use. Use of *tú* where *usted* is expected may express contempt or threat: muggers call their victims *tú*, not *usted*.

In most of Latin America *tú* or *vos* is used less readily than in Spain and learners should probably err on the side of caution by sticking to *usted* (with strangers). A not very educated female character in a Mexican novel complains that *los españoles aunque no se conozcan se gritan y se tutean* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'Spaniards shout at one another and call people *tú* even when they don't know them'.

(1) In Chile *usted* and *tú* can be mixed together for familiar address. In the following extract an upper-class mother on the beach calls to her little son *Alvarito,* ***métase*** *un poco al agua.* ***Mójese*** *las patitas siquiera . . . ¿****Ves*** *que es rica el agüita?* (SV, Ch.) 'Alvarito, go into the water a bit. At least get your feet wet. Do you see how lovely the water is?'

A similar phenomenon is found in Colombia where *usted* is used even for informal address, i.e. where only *tú* or *vos* would be used elsewhere; this phenomenon is called *ustedeo.*

(2) *Usted* and a first name can be combined when one wishes to mark a distance from someone who is familiar, e.g. an employee: *bueno, Pura, pues hasta mañana. Y cierre al salir* (CMG, Sp., spoken to the maid) 'Right, Pura, well, see you tomorrow. And shut the door on the way out'. *Usted* is also used to elderly persons when they are addressed respectfully as *don* + their first name: *¿cómo está usted, don Roberto?*

(3) In some families, especially in rural areas, *usted*(*es*) is used to address parents and grandparents, but the custom is dying out.

12.3.3 *Vosotros/as* or *ustedes*?

Important: *vosotros* (*vosotr****as*** when speaking to females) is the plural of *tú* and is used in Spain for two or more persons in the same circumstances as *tú* is used for one person. It is normal in Spain but in Latin America *vosotros/as* is not used in everyday language and is replaced by *ustedes*, a phenomenon also found in the Canary Islands and locally in popular speech in Southern Spain. A Latin-American mother addresses her child as *tú* or, in some places, *vos*, and her children as *ustedes*. Even animals are called *ustedes* in Latin America.

Foreigners must remember to use *vosotras* to two or more females, but *vosotros* when the groups include at least one male.

Vosotros and its possessive *vuestro* are sometimes found in Latin America in business correspondence, flowery speeches and similar solemn texts, cf. *. . . 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 Britain).

12.3.4 Use of *usted/ustedes*

Usted is a formal or polite pronoun meaning 'you' and is similar to the French *vous*, German *Sie*, although French and German usage is a poor guide: see 12.3.2–3. In Spain *ustedes* is the plural of *usted* and is reserved for formal situations, but in Latin America *ustedes* is the plural of *usted* and also of *tú/vos*. It is therefore the only second-person plural subject pronoun in daily use.

Since they descend from the archaic formula *Vuestra Merced* 'Your Grace', they require third-person verb forms: *usted habla* 'you speak', *ustedes hablan* 'you (plural) speak'. *Usted/ustedes* used to be abbreviated to *V./Vs.*, *Vd./Vds.*, or *Ud./Uds* in official documents or business letters, but the full, lower-case forms *usted/ustedes* are now usual and recommended. Object forms of *usted/ustedes* are discussed under third-person pronouns in Chapters 14 and 15.

(1) As subject pronouns *usted/ustedes* need only appear once at the beginning of a text or utterance and then occasionally thereafter to recall the polite tone. Whereas total omission of *usted/ustedes* may sound too informal, constant repetition may sound grovelling.

12.4 *Nosotros/as, nos*

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 . . .'.

(1) Important: when the subjects of the verb are exclusively females, *nosotr**as*** must be used.

(2) The following construction is found in the Southern Cone: ***fuimos con*** *mi hermano . . .* (elsewhere *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* (ES, Arg., interview; Sp. *fui con Matilde/Matilde y yo fuimos*) 'so Matilde and I went to Patagonia'.

(3) *Nos* for *nosotros* is obsolete, but is used by popes, bishops and monarchs in official documents or ritual language.

12.5 Pronoun agreement in English and Spanish

Verbs sometimes agree with personal pronouns in ways strange to English speakers:

Soy yo/Somos nosotros/Fuisteis vosotros/Fueron ellos	It's me/It's us/It was you/It was them (lit. 'I am me', 'we are we', 'you were you', 'they were they')
*El guapo de la foto **eres** tú*	The handsome one in the photo is you
*Debería volver a escribir, pero no tiene estímulos ya. Y luego que tampoco la **ayudamos nadie*** (CMG, Sp., dialogue)	She ought to start writing again, but there's nothing to stimulate her any more. And after all, none of us helps her either
*—¿Quién ha dicho eso? —**He** sido yo*	'Who said that?' 'It was me'
[any second- or third-person] *y yo* or *nosotros **vamos***	You/(S)he and I are going

Tú or *vosotros y* [*usted*(*es*) or third person] ***van***	You and (s)he/you are going
Él y usted(*es*) [or any third-person pronoun] ***van***	He and you/they are going

When answering the phone one says *soy Ana* 'it's Ana', literally 'I'm Ana', *soy Antonio* 'it's Antonio speaking'. *Es Ana* 'it's Ana' is only possible when someone else is talking about her.

13 Personal pronouns used with prepositions

This short chapter discusses:

- The forms of pronouns after prepositions (Section 13.1)
- *Conmigo* and *contigo* (Section 13.2)
- The pronoun *sí* and the form *consigo* (Section 13.3)

13.1 Forms of pronouns after prepositions

Yo, *tú* and *se* have separate forms used after prepositions: *mí*, *ti* and *sí* (this pronoun is discussed at 13.3). In the other cases the normal subject forms, *él*, *ella*, *ello*, *usted*, *nosotros/as*, *vosotros/as*, *ustedes*, *ellos/ellas*, are used after prepositions.

Important: *mí* and *sí* have an accent to distinguish them from *mi* 'my' and *si* 'if'. *Ti* has no accent – a fact constantly forgotten by foreigners and natives alike:

No sabe nada de mí	(S)he knows nothing about me
No tengo nada contra ti	I've nothing against you
Entre más cerca de ti estoy, más energía recibo por minuto (EP, Mex., dialogue) (*entre más* is normally *cuanto más* elsewhere)	The closer I am to you the more energy I get every minute
Creo en vos (Arg. Sp.and Mex. . . . *en ti*)	I believe in you
no delante de usted/ustedes	not in front of you
Me refiero a él/ella	I'm referring to him/her
Confiamos en ustedes/vosotros/vosotras	We trust/rely on you
Corrió tras ellos	(S)he ran after them
aparte de ellas	except for them (fem.)

Seven prepositions or preposition-like words take the ordinary form of all the subject pronouns (but the pronoun *se* obeys slightly different rules: see 13.3 note 4). These are: *entre* 'between'/'among' (but see note 5), *excepto* 'except', *hasta* when it means 'even' rather than 'as far as', *incluso* 'including'/'even', *menos* 'except', *salvo* 'except'/'save', *según* 'according to':

Todos lo hicieron menos/excepto/salvo tú	They all did it except/save you
Que se quede entre tú y yo	Let's keep it between you and me
Es un asunto entre Hernán y yo (GZ, Mex.)	It's something between Hernán and me
Hasta tú puedes hacer eso	Even you can do that
Según tú no sé nada de la vida (ES, Mex., dialogue)	According to you I know nothing about life

(1) Important: English-speakers must avoid errors like **excepto mí* for *excepto yo*, **entre ti y mí* for *entre tú y yo*, etc.

(2) Important: the preposition is repeated after conjunctions (*y*, *o*): *para ti y para mí* 'for you and me', not **para ti y mí*; *para Mamá y para ti* 'for Mother and you', not **para Mamá y ti.*

(3) Note the set phrases *de tú a tú* 'on equal terms', *hablar de tú* (*i.e. tutear*) 'to address someone as *tú*'.

(4) For constructions like ?*detrás tuyo* for *detrás de ti* 'behind you', or ?*delante mío* for *delante de mí* 'in front of me', see 9.7.

(5) *Mí* is used after *entre* in the set phrase *entre mí* as in *esto va a acabar mal, decía entre mí* 'this is going to end badly, I said to myself'.

There is a popular tendency in some regions to use the prepositional forms with *entre* when this refers to actual spatial location: *esta noche a la Inés la voy a poner a dormir en mi cama, entre mí y la Pelusa* (MP, Arg., dialogue; Sp. *entre la Pelusa y yo*) 'tonight I'm going to put Inés to sleep in my bed between me and Pelusa' (*la Inés* for *Inés* is popular style; see 3.2.21).

(6) *Vos* is the prepositional form used instead of *ti* in Argentina and other regions of *voseo*: *¿querés que mienta por vos?* (CP, Arg., dialogue, i.e. *¿quieres que mienta por ti?*) 'do you want me to lie for you?'

13.2 *Conmigo, contigo*

Important: *conmigo* and *contigo are* special forms used instead of *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'. In the popular speech of some Latin-American countries one hears ?*con mí*, *con yo*, *con ti*, but these forms should be avoided.

13.3 *Sí, consigo*

Sí (with an accent) and *consigo* are special prepositional forms of the pronoun *se*. *Sí* is used after prepositions other than *con*. *Consigo* is used for *con + se* and means 'with himself/herself/yourself' or 'with yourselves/themselves'.

Sí is combined with *mismo* when it is used reflexively: *se lavan a sí mismos* 'they wash themselves'. In other cases use of *mismo* with *sí* is variable, with no clear agreement among native speakers.

No se refiere a sí misma	She's not referring to herself
Este fenómeno ya es muy interesante de por sí	This phenomenon is in itself very interesting
Un brillante que para sí lo quisieran muchos (advert., Sp.)	A diamond many would like for themselves
Volvió en sí (see note 3)	(S)he came round (regained consciousness)
Colocó el vaso junto a sí (LOr, Cu.)	He put the glass next to himself
. . . tan perezosa que difícilmente era capaz de leer por sí sola	. . . so lazy that she was hardly able to read by herself
No puede dar más de sí	(S)he's doing the best (s)he can
Una siempre debe estar segura de sí misma (ES, Mex., dialogue)	One should always be sure of oneself (woman speaking)
Se dedicaba a destruir dentro de sí todo lo que antes había amado (EP, Mex.)	He dedicated himself to destroying within himself everything he had once loved
Está disgustado consigo mismo	He's cross with himself

(1) Some speakers insist on adding *mismo* to *sí* and do not accept phrases like *junto a sí* without it.

(2) *Se* is unique in being the only pronoun requiring a prepositional form after *entre*: *entre tú y yo* 'between you and me', but *entre sí* 'among themselves': *hablan castellano entre sí* (or *entre ellos*) 'they speak Spanish among themselves', *los agentes se miraron entre sí* (EM, Mex.) 'the policemen looked at one another'. *Decía Juan entre sí* means 'John was saying to himself'.

(3) There is a strong colloquial tendency, criticized by the Academy (*NGLE* 16.4d), to use *sí* in the first and second persons of *volver en sí* 'to regain consciousness', *dar de sí* 'to give of oneself' and of a few other constructions. One hears ?*volví en sí*, and the correct *volví en mí* is often avoided, even by educated speakers. The last of the following examples reflects the hesitation of some people: *volví en sí ya estando en la clínica* (interview, *El Nacional*, Mex.) '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* (EA, Sp., dialogue) 'Excuse me, would you mind standing up so we can see you?' 'I *am* standing up. This is all there is of me', *cuando volví en sí, o en mí, escuché un rumor* (SP, Sp., dialogue) 'when I came round I heard a noise'.

(4) There is disagreement about *sí* in the modern language. *Sí* is required when it does not refer to identified persons as in *hay personas que hablan mucho de sí* (*mismas*) 'there are people who talk about themselves a lot'. It should be used (*NGLE* 16.4n) in reflexive sentences where it is the reinforced direct object of the verb: *se lava a* ***sí mismo*** 'he's washing himself', *se criticaron a sí mismos* 'they criticized themselves'; rather than *. . . a él mismo*, *a ellos mismos . . .*

But in other cases when *sí* refers to a specific person, the modern tendency is to use a non-reflexive prepositional pronoun. In answer to a questionnaire, the great majority of informants (professional people and students from Spain) rejected *sí* in the following sentences: *hablan francés entre ellos* (for *entre sí*) 'they speak French among themselves', *lo mantuvo contra ella con uno de sus brazos* (ES, Arg., for *contra sí*) '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)'.

In the previous example, *ante sí* is tolerable, since *ante* is itself literary; but *delante de él* is normal in speech, although some speakers respect the difference between *ante sí* 'in front of him(self)' and *ante él* 'in front of him' (someone else). *Sí* is obligatory in set phrases like *de por sí* 'in itself', *por sí*, *en sí* (*mismo*) 'in itself'.

(5) *Sí* seems to be avoided with *usted*, probably because the latter is felt to be second person while *sí* is third person: *usted tiene ante usted a un hombre que . . .* (interview, *El Nacional*, Mex.) 'you have before you a man who . . .', *guárdeselo para usted* 'keep it for yourself', *yo sé que usted toca para usted misma* (JC, Arg., dialogue) 'I know you play (music) for yourself'.

(6) The French pronoun *soi* has suffered a similar decline over the years, and has been replaced in many contexts by *lui-même*, *elle-même* (*él mismo*, *ella misma*).

14 Personal pronouns, object

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- Forms of object pronouns (Section 14.1)
- Uses of object pronouns (Section 14.2)
- Order of object pronouns (Section 14.2.4)
- Position of object pronouns (Section 14.3)
- *Quiero verlo* or *lo quiero ver*? (Section 14.3.4–5)
- Emphasizing object pronouns (Section 14.4)
- Limits on the possible combinations of object pronouns (Section 14.5)
- Object pronouns and verbs of motion (Section 14.6.1)
- *Resultar* and *ser* with personal pronouns (Section 14.6.2–3)
- Resumptive *lo* with *ser* and *estar* (Section 14.7)
- Object pronouns used to show personal involvement (Section 14.8)
- Replacement of *le* by *se* (the 'rule of two l's') (Section 14.9)
- Latin-American *se los* for *se lo* (Section 14.9.2)
- Redundant object pronouns (Section 14.10)

This chapter deals with the 'object' forms of personal pronouns: *me*, *te*, *lo*, *la*, *le*, *nos*, *os*, *los*, *las*, *les*. These pronouns can cause problems for English-speaking students.

The controversial issue of the difference between *lo/la/los/las* and *le/les* is discussed separately in Chapter 15.

14.1 Forms of object pronouns

The term 'object pronouns' is used in this book to refer to *me*, *te*, *lo*, *la*, *le*, *nos*, *os*, *los*, *las*, *les* and *se*.

Traditional grammars often divide these pronouns into two lists, 'direct object' pronouns and 'indirect object' pronouns, but only the third-person set has two forms, *lo/la/los/las* and *le/les*, and the difference between them is not always the same as the traditional distinction between 'direct' and 'indirect' objects. See Chapter 15.

For 'pronominal' verbs like *irse*, *caerse*, *lavarse* (often misleadingly called 'reflexive' verbs), see Chapter 30.

SINGULAR

Subject pronoun	Object pronoun	English equivalent
yo	*me*	me
tú (and *vos*)	*te*	you (familiar)
él, ella, usted	*lo/le* (masc.), *la/le* (fem.)	him, her, it, you (see note 1)

PLURAL		
nosotros, nosotras	*nos*	us
vosotros, vosotras	*os*	you (familiar, Spain only)
ellos, ellas, ustedes	*los/les* (masc.), *las/les* (fem.)	them, you (see note 1)

(1) The difference between the direct object third-person forms (*lo/la/los/las*) and *le/les* is discussed in Chapter 15.

(2) *Usted/Ustedes* take third-person object pronouns: *los* (in Spain also *les*) *vi* (*a ustedes*) *ayer* 'I saw you (plural) yesterday'.

(3) *Te* is the object form of *tú* and also of *vos* where *vos* is used: see 12.3.1.

(4) *Os* corresponds to *vosotros/vosotras* and is therefore not heard in Latin America, where *ustedes* is used for both polite and familiar address: see 12.3.3.

14.2 Rules governing the use of object pronouns

14.2.1 The vagueness of Spanish object pronouns

Important: the strangest feature of Spanish object pronouns for English speakers is the vagueness of their meanings. Spanish object pronouns merely indicate the person or thing 'affected' in some way by a verb phrase, but they do not themselves show *how* the object is affected: this must be worked out from the meaning of the verb, from context or by common sense. Typical examples are *te pedí un tequila* which means either 'I asked for a tequila **for you**' or 'I asked **you for** a tequila', or *me operé de apendicitis*, which will surely mean 'I was operated on for appendicitis' but could have the unlikely meaning 'I operated on myself for appendicitis'. This vagueness can be seen in these 15 different translations of the Spanish word *me*:

Me han visto They've seen **me**
Me dejó una finca (S)he left an estate **to me**
Me ha aparcado el coche (S)he's parked the car **for me**
Me compró una agenda (S)he bought a diary **off me/for me**
Me sacaron tres balas They took three bullets **out of me**
Me pusieron un marcapasos They put a pacemaker **in** me
Me han quitado a mis hijos They've taken my children **from me**
Me tiene envidia (S)he's envious **of me**
Me tiró una bola de nieve (S)he threw a snowball **at me**
Me encontraron mil dólares They found $1000 **on me**
Me echaron una manta They threw a blanket **over me**
Voy a buscarme un hotel I'm going to find **myself** a hotel
Siempre me pone pegas (S)he always finds fault **with me**
Me rompí el brazo I broke **my** arm
Se me ha roto el lavavajillas The dishwasher has broken down '**on**' me

(1) 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 as in *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 30.

14.2.2 The difference between direct object and indirect object pronouns

Important: there is no difference in **form** between first- and second-person direct object pronouns, and indirect object pronouns as can be seen from these examples:

*Mario **me/te/nos** vio*	Mario saw **me/you/us** (direct obj.)
*Mario **me/te/nos** dio un regalo*	Mario gave a present **to me/you/us** (indirect object)

The crucial difference is that English indirect objects can only receive something, Spanish indirect objects **can receive or lose**. English and Spanish both say *te enviaron un paquete* 'they sent you a parcel'. But English does not allow *'they confiscated you a parcel' whereas Spanish does: *te confiscaron un paquete*. This basic difference between the two languages must be remembered at all times.

14.2.3 Use of third-person object pronouns for *usted/ustedes*

Third-person object 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 15.5.1 and 2)	I saw you/him yesterday
Lo vi ayer (Latin America and, optionally, Spain too)	I saw it/him/you yesterday
Los/las vi ayer	I saw you/them yesterday

14.2.4 Order of object pronouns

Important: when more than one object pronoun appears, their invariable order is:

1	2	3	4
se	*te/os*	*me/nos*	*le/lo/la/les/los/las*

i.e. *se*, if it occurs, comes first, second person precedes first person, and third-person pronouns come last:

María te lo dijo	Maria told it to you
Me lo encontré el otro día (GZ, Mex., dialogue)	I met him by chance the other day
No querían comunicárnoslo	They didn't want to tell it to us
Se te ha caído la tinta	You've dropped the ink
Nos los vamos a comprar	We're going to buy them for ourselves
Se nos ha vuelto listísimo	He's turned into a genius 'on us'
Yo me le fui encima (JC, Arg., Sp. *yo me le eché encima*)	I lunged at her

(1) As explained in Chapter 15, in Spain *le* is constantly used as a **direct** object pronoun referring to human males: *no le conozco* for *no lo conozco* 'I don't know him'.

(2) Reversal of the correct order with *se*, 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 well-known mistake of uneducated speech, sometimes imitated by comedians to raise a laugh.

(3) In all the examples given, the pronouns are in the order indirect object – direct object (*te lo doy* 'I give it to you', *se lo tragaron* 'they swallowed it', etc.).

However, if *te me criticaron* means 'they criticized you to me', how does one say 'they criticized me to you'? Apparently, the same order is used for both meanings, so ***te me*** *recomendaron/alabaron/criticaron/presentaron* 'they recommended/praised/ criticized/introduced you to me' could also be understood as '. . . me to you'; the *GDLE* 19.5.7 can find no explanation for this strange ambiguity. In practice the problem is avoided, e.g. by simply saying *me recomendaron*, etc. There is no problem if the verb form makes the meaning clear: *¡qué guapa te me* ***has*** *puesto!* can only mean 'how attractive you have made yourself for me!' and *iba a llamarte pero te me anticipaste* can only mean 'I was going to phone/call you but you called me first/got in first'.

(4) Important: one can never join these unstressed pronouns with 'and', 'but' or any other word: 'I saw him and her' is **never** ***lo y la vi*. The only possibility is to use the contrastive forms (14.4): *lo/le vi a él y la vi a ella* or *los vi a él y a ella.* 'I saw him but not her' is *lo/le vi a él pero no a ella.*

(5) Identical pronouns cannot appear side by side, so combinations like *me me*, *se se* cannot occur (see 30.11 for how to avoid the latter).

14.3 Position of object pronouns

The position of object pronouns in relation to a verb depends on the form of the verb.

14.3.1 Pronouns with finite verbs

Pronouns appear in the order given at 14.2.4 immediately before finite verbs, i.e. all verb forms except for the infinitive, gerund, past participle and imperative:

Se los entregamos	We gave them (masc.) to him/her/it/them/you (for *se* here see 14.9)
Te los enviaré luego	I'll send them (masc.) to you later
Nos las guardan	They're keeping/keep them (fem.) for us

In compound tenses (i.e. tenses formed with *haber* plus the past participle) the pronouns are placed before *haber*:

Lo he comprado	I've bought it
Nos habían visto	They had seen us

(1) No word may come between the object pronouns and a verb so a sentence like ***la siempre había admirado* is impossible for *siempre la había admirado* 'I had always admired her'.

In pronunciation these pronouns are always unstressed: *me lo ha escrito* is pronounced as one word [me-lo-aes-krí-to].

(2) In pre-twentieth-century literary style, object pronouns were sometimes joined to finite verbs: *contestoles así* '(s)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 except in a few set phrases, e.g. *habrase visto . . .* 'well, did you ever . . .' (usually written with an unnecessary accent *habráse visto*), *diríase* (literary) 'one might say', *dícese* (literary) 'it is said'. *Dícese que* survives in various forms in spoken Latin-American Spanish, e.g. *dizque*; see 32.4.1 note 8.

Pronouns attached to finite forms are occasionally seen, with declining frequency, in solemn headlines in some Latin-American countries: *Enrédanse gobiernos de Washington y Londres en mentiras sobre Irak* (*Granma*, Cu.) 'Governments in Washington and London bogged down in lies over Iraq'.

14.3.2 Position of object pronouns with imperatives

Object pronouns are added to positive (not negative) imperatives: *dímelo* 'tell it to me', *cómprenoslo* 'buy it for us', but *no me lo digas*, *no nos lo compre*. See Chapter 21 for a full discussion.

14.3.3 Position of object pronouns with infinitives

(**a**) If the infinitive is not preceded by a finite verb, pronouns are suffixed to it in the usual order:

Sería una locura encenderlo	It would be crazy to set fire to it
Rechazaron el proyecto por considerarlo demasiado caro	They rejected the project on the grounds it was too expensive
Estamos hartos de oírtelo	We're fed up with hearing it from you
. . . amplios sectores que no están dispuestos a permitírselo (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	broad sections of the population who are not prepared to allow them to do it

Important: as the examples show, when two or more pronouns are attached to an infinitive, a written accent is needed to show that the position of the stress has not changed. Compare *quitarme* and *quitármela.*

(**b**) If the infinitive depends on a finite verb, there are two possibilities:

Either join the pronouns to the infinitive, as in the previous examples:

Quiero hacerlo	I want to do it
Pudieron salvarla	They managed to save her
Intentaron robárnoslo	They tried to steal it from us
Propusieron alquilárnoslos	They suggested renting them to us
No tomé nada, alguien debió dármelo (*Informador*, Mex.)	I didn't take anything, someone must have given it to me

This is the safest option for students as it is always correct.

Or put the pronouns before the finite verb: *lo quiero hacer*, *te lo acabo de dar*, etc. See the following section for a discussion of this possibility.

14.3.4 *Quiero verlo* or *lo quiero ver*?

Students will constantly hear constructions with 'shifted' pronouns as in *lo voy a hacer*, *lo quieren comprar* instead of *voy a hacerlo*, *quieren comprarlo* 'I'm going to do it', 'they want to buy it'. Both forms are equally acceptable, but the shifted forms are more common in spontaneous speech. The following verbs frequently appear in this construction, but many other verbs also allow it (see 22.2.2):

querer	
Te la quiero enviar/Quiero enviártela	I want to send it (fem.) to you
Por mucho que yo se lo quiera dar/quiera dárselo, no puedo	However much I want to give it (masc.) to you/him/her/them, I can't

poder	
No puedo atenderle/No le puedo atender en este momento	I can't attend to you/her/him at this moment
Usted no me lo puede quitar/no puede quitármelo	You can't take it/him away from me
deber	
Deberías explicárnoslo/Nos lo deberías explicar	You ought to explain it to us
tener que	
Tiene que devolvértelo/Te lo tiene que devolver	(S)he has to give it back to you
acabar de	
Pero acabo de verlo/lo acabo de ver	But I've just seen him!
llegar a	
Incluso llegué a caerme/me llegué a caer por unas escaleras	I even managed to fall down a flight of stairs
haber de	
He de consultarlo/Lo he de consultar con la almohada	I'd better sleep on it (lit. 'consult my pillow')
dejar de	
No dejes de llamarla/No la dejes de llamar	Don't forget to phone her
ir a	
Me temía que Roberto fuera a contárselo/se lo fuera a contar a mamá	I was worried that Roberto would go and tell it to mother
volver a	
Como vuelvas a decírmelo/Como me lo vuelvas a decir, me voy	If you say it to me again, I'm going

14.3.5 When is the shifted construction not allowed?

The 'shifted' construction is not possible with all verbs: the list at 22.2.2 shows most of the verbs that allow the construction.

There are several situations in which the shifted construction is not allowed with any verbs or has restrictions:

(1) When pronouns are joined to an infinitive they must stay together if they are shifted. *Tienes que decírmelo* can be shifted to *me lo tienes que decir* 'you have to tell it to me', but not to **me tienes que decirlo*.

(2) If the finite (non-infinitive) verb already has an object pronoun, shifting is not allowed. In *te interesa hacerlo* 'it's in your interest to do it' the *te* goes with *interesa*, so **te lo interesa hacer* is not possible.

Some verbs, notably those meaning 'to allow' and also *ver*, are exceptions to this rule. *Me lo permitieron hacer* is informal for *me permitieron hacerlo* 'they allowed me to do it', *me la dejaron ver is* possible for *me dejaron verla* 'they let me see her/it'. *Nos ha visto hacerlo* for *nos lo ha visto hacer* '(s)he saw us do it' is also possible, but colloquial in tone.

(3) No other word can be placed in a shifted construction between the finite verb and the infinitive: *preferiría no hacerlo* 'I'd prefer not to do it' but not **lo preferiría* ***no*** *hacer*, *quiero mucho verla*, but not **la quiero mucho ver* 'I really want to see her', etc. **Exceptions**: a few common verb phrases that include a preposition, usually *a* or *de*, or the conjunction *que* allow shifting in colloquial speech: *lo trató* ***de*** *hacer/trató de hacerlo* '(s)he tried to do it', *lo empezó* ***a*** *hacer/empezó a hacerlo* '(s)he began to do it', *no le tengo* ***nada*** *que envidiar* 'I've got nothing to envy him/her/you for', *el que no se tiene que andar metiendo eres tú* (AM, Mex., dialogue) 'the one who shouldn't go round getting involved is you'.

(4) If the main verb is a positive imperative (and is therefore not strictly speaking a *finite* verb form), shifting is not allowed: *procura hacerlo* 'try to do it', *venga a verla* 'come and see her/it', not **lo procura hacer*, **la venga a ver*. Colloquial speech may break this rule with *dejar*: *déjamelo hacer a mi estilo* (ABV, Sp., dialogue, for *déjame hacerlo . . .*) 'let me do it my way'.

With negative imperatives, shifting may occur in familiar speech: *no intentes hacerlo/no lo intentes hacer* 'don't try to do it', *cuidado, no vayas a mancharlo/no lo vayas a manchar* 'be careful not to make it dirty', *no te empieces a incluir tú en las culpas* (CMG, Sp., dialogue) 'don't start feeling guilty'/'don't start blaming yourself as well' for *no empieces a incluirte tú en las culpas*.

(5) ***Hay que*** in any of its tenses does not allow pronoun shifting in educated speech, although sentences like ?*lo hay que hacer* (for *hay que hacerlo*) are heard in popular speech in certain regions. The *NGLE* 28.6s disapproves. ***Parecer*** also does not allow shifting: *parecía reconocerla* '(s)he seemed to recognize her', not **la parecía reconocer*.

(6) If the finite verb means saying, believing, claiming, etc., shifting is not allowed: *creen saberlo todo* but not **lo creen saber todo*, 'they think they know everything', *negabas haberlo hecho* but not **lo negabas haber hecho* 'you denied having done it' (*GDLE* 19.5.5).

(7) If more than one infinitive is involved in a construction that allows pronoun shifting, several solutions are possible, the first being safest for foreigners:

No quiero volver a decírtelo/No quiero volvértelo a decir/No te lo quiero volver a decir	I don't want to tell you it again
Puedes empezar a hacerlo/Puedes empezarlo a hacer/Lo puedes empezar a hacer	You can start to do it
Debes tratar de hacerlo/Debes tratarlo de hacer (lo debes tratar de hacer is colloquial)	You must try to do it

14.3.6 Position of pronouns with the gerund

(**a**) In combination with *estar* (continuous verb forms) and a few other verbs, e.g. *andar*, *ir*, *venir*, *quedarse*, the pronouns may be either attached or shifted:

Te lo estoy contando/Estoy contándotelo	I'm telling you it/telling it to you
Se estaba dejando ganar por la autocompasión (MVLl, Pe., or *estaba dejándose ganar*)	He was giving in to self-pity
Os lo estoy diciendo/Estoy diciéndooslo (Spain only: note the double *o*. Lat. Am. *se lo estoy diciendo/estoy diciéndoselo*)	I'm telling you
Se lo va contando a todos/Va contándoselo a todos	(S)he goes around telling it to everyone
Se lo/le quedó mirando/Se quedó mirándolo/le	(S)he stood gazing at him

(**b**) In nearly all other cases the pronouns are attached to the gerund: *disfruta mirándolos* '(s)he enjoys himself/herself by looking at them', *hay muchos usuarios esperándolo* (*Excélsior*, Mex.), 'there are lots of users waiting for it'.

(1) Attaching pronouns to the gerund is slightly more formal and probably safer for foreign students. If the auxiliary verb is an infinitive preceded by one of the verbs that allow pronoun shifting (see 14.3.4–5), several solutions are possible: *debe estar recordándolo/?debe estarlo recordando/lo debe estar recordando* '(s)he must be remembering it/him', *tenían que seguir observándolos/los tenían que seguir observando/?tenían que seguirlos observando* 'they had to go on observing them'.

(2) *Seguir* allows both constructions, but a number of native speakers would not accept pronoun shifting with *continuar*: *se seguían viendo/seguían viéndose* 'they went on seeing one another', *nos siguen faltando 43* (*Excélsior*, Mex.) 'we're still missing 43 (people)', *ella lo siguió encontrando todo muy natural* (ABE, Pe.) 'she continued to find it all very natural'; but *continuaban viéndose*, *continúa dándome la lata* '(s)he's still being a nuisance to me' rather than **se continuaban viendo*, **me continúa dando . . .*

14.3.7 Position of object pronouns with past participles

Pronouns come before the auxiliary verb:

Se ha equivocado	(S)he's made a mistake
Se lo han traído de China	They've brought it from China
Te lo hemos mandado ya	We've already sent it to you

(1) In phrases in which pronoun shifting is possible (discussed at 14.3.4–5), there are two options: *se lo hemos tenido que vender/hemos tenido que vendérselo* 'we had to sell it to him/her', *la he vuelto a ver/he vuelto a verla* 'I've seen her again', *no he podido abrirlo/no lo he podido abrir* 'I wasn't able to open it', *ha debido de hablarle/le ha debido de hablar* '(s)he must have spoken to him/her'.

(2) Literary language used to join personal pronouns to past participles, especially when the auxiliary verb was omitted. Kany, 156, cites *un accidente ocurrídole en el corral de yeguas* 'an accident that happened to him in the yard where the mares are kept' from Uruguay. Seco (1998), 334, says this is 'inelegant', and the sentence would now be written *un accidente que le había ocurrido . . .*

14.4 Emphasis of object pronouns

14.4.1 Emphasis of object pronouns in non-reflexive phrases

The object pronouns may be emphasized by adding *a* + the prepositional form of the pronoun (i.e. the forms shown at 13.1):

La** vi **a ella**, pero no **a él	I saw **her** but not **him**
Te lo darán a ti, pero no a ella	They'll give it **to you**, but not **to her**
¡A mí me lo dices!	You're telling **me**!
Si me retirara, pues, tampoco lo vería a usted (SG, Mex., dialogue)	If I retired, well, I wouldn't see **you** either

(1) English speakers are tempted to omit the unstressed pronoun in these constructions, but **vi a ella* is not Spanish for ***la** vi a ella* 'I saw *her*'. However, *usted* occasionally appears alone: *¿en qué puedo servir a ustedes?* (example from *GDLE* 19.4.1) 'how can I help you', more often . . . *servir**les** a ustedes*.

14.4.2 Emphasis of object pronouns in reflexive phrases

'Reflexive' phrases may be emphasized by the appropriate number and gender of *mismo* added to a prepositional pronoun. Reciprocal sentences (i.e. meaning 'one another') can be emphasized by the appropriate form of *el uno* and *el otro*:

*Se lavaron **a sí mismos***	They washed **themselves**
Es difícil vivir con quien no se estima a sí mismo (*Abc*, Sp.)	It is difficult to live with someone who does not value himself/herself
Se quieren el uno al otro	They love one another
Se quieren la una a la otra (two females)	They love one another
Sólo nos tenemos los unos a los otros (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	All we have is one another (i.e. our fellow humans)

(1) If a male and a female are involved in a reciprocal action one might expect *el uno a la otra* or *la una al otro*, but both pronouns are normally left in the masculine: *Rubén y María se quieren **el uno al otro*** 'Ruben and Maria love one another', but *María y Laura se quieren **la una a la otra*** (two females).

14.5 Combinations of object pronouns

14.5.1 Limits on the possible combinations of object pronouns

Spanish allows the following combinations of object pronouns before a verb or attached to an infinitive, imperative or gerund; (a), (b) and (c) are very common:

(**a**) One direct object pronoun: *la vi* 'I saw her/it', *sin conocerlos* 'without knowing them'

(**b**) One indirect object pronoun *me dijiste* 'you said to me', *estaban enseñándonos la muestra* 'they were showing us the sample';

(**c**) An indirect object pronoun followed by a direct object pronoun *me lo diste* 'you gave it to me', *¿puedo probármelo?* 'can I try it on?', *cómpratelo* 'buy it for yourself'.

The following two combinations are less common:

(**d**) Two indirect object pronouns: *me le has estropeado la camisa* 'you've spoilt his/her shirt for me!', *sírvamele un helado al niño* 'serve the little boy an ice-cream for me', *échamele un vistazo a esta carta* 'have a look at this letter for me'. This combination of two indirect objects is avoided when the first pronoun is not *me*, so sentences like **nos te pusieron una multa* 'they gave you a fine "on us"' are avoided. It also sounds very strange when the second pronoun is not *le/les*: **me nos has roto el teléfono* *'you've broken the telephone "on us"' would be avoided in both languages.

(**e**) A direct object followed by an indirect object, as in *¡qué borde te nos has puesto!* 'how unpleasant you've made yourself for us!'/'you've really become unpleasant towards us!'

(1) The combination of two *direct* object pronouns is not possible in Spanish and is awkward in English, cf. ?'he was declared president, and after they declared **him it**, he went on to . . .', which would have to be recast in Spanish: *después de que lo/le nombraran presidente, pasó a . . . .* This constraint on the use of direct object pronouns in Spanish clarifies the difference between passive and impersonal *se*. See 32.5.2.

(2) For the impossibility of ***lo y la vi* for 'I saw him and her', see 14.2.4 note 4.

14.6 Object pronouns with verbs of motion and with *ser* and *resultar*

14.6.1 Object pronouns with verbs of motion

Object pronouns are not used when 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', *se acercó a la mesa* > *se acercó a ella*, not ?**se le acercó.*

todo el occidente que vino a nosotros . . . (MVLl, Pe.)	the whole of the west (i.e. western world) which came to us . . .
Suele recurrir a él cuando no le queda más remedio	(S)he usually turns to him when (s)he has no alternative
¿Cómo piensan la universidad los que acuden a ella? (*La Jornada*, Mex. A rare transitive) use of *pensar*)	What do those who go to it think of university? (i.e. what do students think of university?)

However, exceptions occur colloquially with the following verbs, particularly if the verb is third person:

Él se le acercó por la espalda (JMs, Sp.)	He approached her from behind
Ella se le reunió al doblar la esquina (LG, Sp.)	She caught up with him as she turned the corner
No te le acerques (EP, Mex., dialogue)	Don't go near him
No sólo los sollozos de los niños se alzaron entonces, sino que se les unieron los de los sirvientes (JD, Ch.)	Not only did the children's sobs ring out, but the servants' sobbing was added to it

(1) This construction is rare in the first and second persons: *se le opuso* '(s)he opposed him/her' for *se opuso a él* is possible, but *te opusiste a él* 'you opposed him' rather than ?*te le opusiste*. First- and second-person forms are more common in Latin America, especially Mexico (J. Lope Blanch, 1991, 20), so one quite often finds sentences like *te ruego que te nos incorpores* (for *. . . que te incorpores a nosotros*) 'I'm asking you to join us'.

(2) *Se le puso delante*, *se me puso delante* '(s)he stood in front of him/her', '(s)he/you stood in front of me' frequently occur colloquially for *se puso delante de él/se puso delante de mí*, and are more dramatic in tone.

(3) Important: the example above from JD (José Donoso – *se les unieron . . .*) unusually breaks the rule that object pronouns are not used with such verbs when the sentence refers to non-human things. The normal construction would be *se unieron a ellos.* Donoso's example may be a case of personification, in which case the *les* is explicable.

(4) Object pronouns are used with *llegar*, *venirse* and *venir con* when their object is human: *cuando me llegó la noticia de su triunfo . . .* 'when news of his/her/your triumph reached me . . .', *el armario se le vino encima* 'the cupboard/US closet collapsed on him/her/you', *a mí no me venga usted con cuentos porque yo todo lo sé* (ABE, Pe., dialogue) 'don't come to me with stories because I know all about it'.

(5) In *le viene a decir que . . .* '(s)he's coming to tell him/her that . . .' the *le* belongs to the *decir*: *viene a decirle que . . .* In *le viene bien* 'it suits him/her' and *¿qué tal te va?* 'how are things going'/'how're you doing?', advantage, not motion, is involved.

14.6.2 Pronouns with *ser*, *resultar* and adjectives

This section covers the difficult question of why one can say *esta herramienta* ***me es*** *útil* 'this tool is useful *to* me' but not **esta casa* ***me es*** *oscura*? 'this house is dark to me'. English has similar complications: why can one say 'she was always kind *to* me' but not *'she was always shy *to* me' (for . . . always shy *with* me')?

Ser + an object pronoun is possible only with certain kinds of adjective:

Nos era imprescindible contactar a tus padres	We absolutely had to contact your parents
Le era más fácil soportar los dolores ajenos que los propios (GGM, Col.)	It was easier for him to put up with other people's suffering than his own
Voy a serle muy franca (ABE, Pe., dialogue)	I'm going to be very frank with you
Para serte sincero me repele Lombardo Toledano (EP, Mex., dialogue)	To be honest with you, Lombardo Toledano repels me

The following list shows some other adjective that can take object pronouns with *ser*:

agradable/desagradable agreeable/ disagreeable
ajeno strange
conocido/desconocido known/unknown
doloroso painful
fácil/difícil easy/difficult
familiar familiar
favorable favourable
fiel/infiel faithful/unfaithful
grato/ingrato pleasing/ displeasing
indiferente indifferent
leal loyal
lícito permitted
natural natural
necesario/innecesario necessary/unnecessary
permitido/prohibido allowed/prohibited
posible/imposible possible/ impossible
rentable profitable
sabido known
simpático/antipático nice/ nasty (of persons)
sincero, franco sincere, frank
suficiente/insuficiente sufficient
útil/inútil useful/useless

The problem is made more complicated by the existence of two other Spanish verbs, *resultar* and *quedar*(*se*), that can also be used with object pronouns and adjectives as in *le resultaba barato* 'it seemed cheap to her/him', *pero me ha quedado claro que tendrás lo que quieras* 'but it's clear to me that you'll get what you want' (LS, Sp., dialogue). *Quedar*(*se*) is discussed in more detail at 30.7.33, and *resultar* is discussed further at 31.3.7. Examples of the use of *resultar* with adjectives and object pronouns:

Me resulta muy triste la situación que está viviendo (*Excélsior*, Mex., not *me es . . .*)	I find the situation he's living through very sad
. . . un gesto que siempre me resulta llamativo (LS, Sp.)	. . . a gesture that I always find striking
Me resulta difícil y absurdamente arriesgado comprar algo para quien conozco poco (CP, Arg.)	I find it difficult and absurdly risky to buy something for someone I don't know well
. . . envuelta en una sábana, pues ahora su desnudez le resultaba insoportable (ES, Mex.)	. . . wrapped in a sheet because she now found her nakedness unbearable

The following are adjectives that often appear in the construction object pronoun + *resultar* + adjective:

aburrido boring
apropiado appropriate
atractivo attractive
caro expensive
cómodo comfortable
conveniente suitable
divertido amusing
emocionante exciting
evidente evident
familiar familiar
gracioso funny
imposible impossible
insólito unusual
inteligible intelligible
interesante interesting

molesto bothersome	*pesado* annoying	*sorprendente* surprising
peligroso dangerous	*pintoresco* picturesque	*sospechoso* suspicious

Some of these adjectives can also be used with *ser*, e.g. *me era/resultaba imposible/familiar/lejano* 'I found it impossible/familiar/distant', etc.

The difference between these adjectives and those that can appear in the construction *me/te/le/nos/os/les*. + *ser* + adjective seems to be that *ser* is used with adjectives that involve a higher level of personal emotional involvement, e.g. *leal* 'loyal', *fiel* 'faithful', *sincere* 'sincere'. But we admit that it is often very difficult to explain why some phrases, e.g. *les era útil* 'it was useful for them' sound correct and others, like **me es emocionante* sound wrong whereas *me resulta emocionante* 'I find it exciting' is normal.

(1) Many adjectives can also be constructed with *para*: *¿tan difícil te es vivir conmigo?* (ABV, Sp., dialogue) or *¿tan difícil es para ti vivir conmigo?* 'is it so hard for you to live with me?', *es conveniente para ellos/les resulta conveniente* 'it's suitable for/to them'

(2) The nuance conveyed by *resultar* is often almost untranslatable. Compare *es feo* = 'it/he's ugly' and *resulta feo* 'the effect is ugly'/'he/it is ugly as a result'; also *el Senador resultó más tímido de lo que esperaba* 'the Senator turned out to be shyer than she had expected' (ES, Mex.). See 31.3.7 for more details.

14.6.3 *Ser* and *resultar* plus object pronouns and nouns:

Si le es molestia, dígamelo	If it's a nuisance for you, tell me
Nos es de interés . . .	It's of interest to us . . .
Me/Le era un gran placer/Era un gran placer	It was a great pleasure for/to me/him, etc.
También tu hermano resultó un traidor (ES, Mex., dialogue)	Your brother turned out to be a traitor too
Mujeres rubias que al final resultaron ser también hombres rubios (APR, Sp.)	Blond women who eventually turned out to be blond men as well
La salina resultó un buen negocio (MVLl, Pe.)	The salt mine/salt works turned out to be a good business
Pues atrévase a contarla . . . . Resultaría una gran novela (CMG, Sp., dialogue)	Well, have the courage to tell it [*la . . . . historia*]. It would make a great novel

(1) 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 . . .*).

14.7 'Resumptive' lo with *ser, estar, parecer* and *hay*

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 8.4.2. For *lo hay*, *los hay/las hay*, etc., see 34.2.2.

14.8 Object pronouns used to denote personal involvement

Object pronouns may simply show that a person is emotionally affected, as in the indignant Frenchman's *regardez-**moi** ça!* 'just look at that for me!'. Usually the effect is untranslatable into standard English, but popular English sometimes uses 'on me', 'on you', etc., to include the person affected: *se **me** han ido de casa* 'they've left home "on me"', *se **le** ha averiado el coche* 'his/her car's broken down "on him/her"':

Pues, yo eché a una porque me fumaba y ahora tengo otra que, además de fumar, me bebe (EA, Sp., dialogue, colloquial)	Well, I fired one [maid] because she smoked 'on me' and now I've got another who not only smokes but drinks 'on me'
Los alumnos se me habían largado a una manifestación (ABE, Pe., dialogue),	The students had gone off to a demonstration
¿No estará pensando embalsamarnos al Presidente . . .? (I A, Ch., dialogue)	You aren't thinking of having the President embalmed for us?
Mi suegra compró un reloj y al mes no le caminaba (AA, Cu., dialogue; Sp. *no le funcionaba*)	My mother-in-law bought a watch and a month later it didn't work ('on her')
¡Me le has estropeado tres camisas! (popular style)	You've spoilt three of his shirts for me!
Cuídenme mucho a este niño (EP, Mex.)	Look after this child well for me
Péiname a la niña	Do the little girl's hair for me

(1) This device of including an emotionally involved person is used more in parts of Latin America than in Spain. *Me le pintaste la mesa* 'you painted the table for him/her for me' is acceptable for some Latin-American speakers, but, with some exceptions, European Spanish tends to avoid clusters of two indirect object pronouns. See 14.5.

(2) If the person involved is in the third person, *le* or *les* must be used, not *lo/la/los/las*: *se* ***le*** *murió un hijo* 'one of his/her children/sons died'.

14.9 'The Rule of Two L's'

14.9.1 Replacement of *le* by *se*

Important: two pronouns beginning with *l* cannot stand side by side. 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*:

*Quiero dár**se**lo*	I want to give it to him/her/you/them
***Se** lo dije a ella*	I told it to her
***Se** lo dije a ellos*	I told it to them (masc.)
*¿Quiere usted que **se** lo envuelva?*	Do you want me to wrap it for you?
Anne quiso ayudarnos con la maleta . . .	Anne wanted to help us with the suitcase.
*No **se** lo permitimos* (JH, Mex., dialogue)	We didn't let her

(1) This phenomenon, which has no counterpart in French, Italian or Portuguese, is sometimes explained by the 'ugliness' of too many l's. This explanation is implausible, but it reminds students that in Spanish two object pronouns beginning with l can ***never*** stand side by side. This is a very strong rule, observed throughout the Spanish-speaking world in all styles of language.

14.9.2 Latin-American *se los* for *se lo*

The combination *se* + neuter *lo* is very ambiguous. *Se lo dije* may mean 'I told it to him, to her, to you (*usted*)', 'to them' (*ellos* or *ellas*) or 'to 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 very widespread tendency in Latin America to show that *se* stands for *les* by pluralizing the direct object pronoun, i.e. *se los dije*, for *se lo dije a ellos/ellas* 'I told it to them':

A un policía le había gustado más bien poco la gracia y se ***los*** *había dicho* (JC, Arg., dialogue, for *se lo había dicho*)	One policeman really didn't like the joke and told them so
Si eso es cierto es un pecado y se ***los*** *voy a prohibir* (GZ, Mex., dialogue)	If that's so, then it's a sin and I will forbid them to do it

DeMello (1992), 1, reports that in Mexico City this construction is of about equal frequency in educated and uneducated speech and it is on the way to being accepted as correct throughout Latin America; but it is less common in Lima, La Paz and a few other places. This construction is not used in Spain where only *se lo* is possible in this context.

14.10 Redundant object pronouns

Spanish constantly uses object pronouns even when the thing they refer to is already named by a noun. In this respect, it is very different from French and English. Some of these redundant pronouns are virtually obligatory; others are more typical of informal styles.

14.10.1 Redundant object pronouns when the objects precede the verb

If, for purposes of emphasis or focus, a direct or indirect object precedes a verb, a redundant pronoun is obligatory except in the cases mentioned in note 1. Compare *compré esta casa hace cinco años* and *esta casa* ***la*** *compré hace cinco años* 'I bought this house five years ago'. Examples:

Eso no me ***lo*** *negarás*	You won't deny me that
El dinero me ***lo*** *llevo yo* (CF, Mex., dialogue)	I'm taking the money with me
A alguno de vosotros ***os*** *quisiera ver yo en un buen fregado* (DS, Sp. dialogue)	I'd like to see one of you in a real mess

(1) Important: redundant pronouns are not used with *indefinite* direct objects, i.e. by ones not accompanied by *el/la/los/las*, *este/ese/aquel*, or some word meaning 'my', 'your', 'her', etc.: *mucha prisa ha debido tener* '(s)he *must* have been in a hurry', *carne no como* '*meat* I don't eat!', *aviones tenemos aquí que han costado millones* 'we've got planes here that cost millions . . .', *¡cuántas tonterías dices!* 'what a lot of nonsense you talk!'; but *los libros* ***los*** *dejo aquí* 'I'll leave the books here'.

Use of *las* in the following example would be incorrect: —*¿compraste flores? — Sí, compré* (*GDLE* 24.2.1, not *las compré*) '"Did you buy flowers?" "Yes, I did"' (*las compré* answers *¿compraste* ***las*** *flores?*). *GDLE* 5.3.2.4 and 5.5 notes that sentences like ?*fiebre no* ***la*** *tiene* are heard in northern dialects in Spain.

A numeral on its own does not always make a noun definite: *mil euros te doy por el cuadro* 'I'll give you 1000 euros for the painting', but, usually, ***los*** *mil euros te* ***los*** *doy* 'I'll give you *the* thousand euros'.

(2) The redundant pronoun is not used 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**').

(3) For a discussion of the effect of putting the object before the verb see Chapter 42, especially 42.9.2.

14.10.2 **Redundant pronouns and indirect objects**

When an indirect object **follows** a verb, a redundant pronoun is also very frequently used:

Bueno, si no ***le*** *dicen* ***a uno*** *cómo hay que hacerlo*	Well, if they don't tell one how to do it . . .
Esta solución ***le p****areció* ***a doña Matilde*** *la más acertada* (JMG, Sp.)	This solution seemed to be the best one to Doña Matilde
Se ***le*** *notan cada vez más los años* ***a José***	You can tell José's age more and more
Les *tenía mucho miedo* ***a los truenos***	(S)he was very frightened of thunder
No ***le*** *ha dicho nada* ***a su madre*** (GZ, Mex., dialogue)	He hasn't told his mother anything
*Tráiga****le*** *un jugo de naranja* ***a la niña*** (AM, Mex., dialogue. *Jugo* = meat juice in Spain; *el zumo* = fruit juice)	Bring the girl an orange juice

(1) Absence of the redundant pronoun in such cases depersonalizes the indirect object and would be natural in official documents or business letters when a formal tone is required: *escriba una carta al Ministerio de Hacienda* 'write a letter to the Ministry of Finance', *El gobierno no ocultará al Papa Francisco los problemas internos del país* (*UnoMásUno*, Mex.) 'the Government will not conceal the internal problems of the country from Pope Francis', *esto no corresponde a Odradek* (JLB, Arg. 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* 'this type of floor must be waxed every week'.

In most other cases the redundant pronoun is used, more so than 50 years ago and almost always with proper names: *dáselo a Mario* 'Give it to Mario', *se lo robaron a Muriel* 'they stole it from Muriel' (*robar a . . .* 'to steal from . . .'). However, the redundant pronoun is sometimes omitted with other nouns for stylistic reasons, cf. *una forma estudiada de acentuar la ironía que gusta a todas las mujeres* (JM, Sp.) 'a studied way of emphasizing the irony that all women like', where *les gusta a las mujeres* is less literary; or *todo lo que sobra de esta mañana lo podés dar a las gallinas* (MP, Arg., dialogue; or *se lo podés dar a las gallinas*. Spain *puedes* for the *vos* form *podés*) 'you can give the chickens everything left over from this morning'. The *GDLE*, 19.4.1, says that omission is very rare, although slightly more frequent with *decir* and *dar*.

(2) This rule does not apply – at least in Spain – to *direct* objects that follow the verb as in *Ana vio a Julia* 'Ana saw Julia'. See 14.10.4.

14.10.3 ***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*. DeMello (1992), 2, reports that in Latin America it is equally common with non-human and humans, but Peninsular informants generally reported it as less acceptable with humans:

Cualquiera ***le*** *da vuelta a las razones por las que te viniste conmigo* (JMG. Sp., dialogue)	Anyone might ponder on the reasons why you came to me
*no dar****le*** *importancia a los detalles*	not to ascribe importance to details
*¿Quieres devolver****le*** *la isla de Manhattan a los Algonquins?* (CF, Mex., dialogue)	Do you want to give Manhattan Island back to the Algonquins?
?***Le*** *viene natural a los niños* (educated Spaniard, overheard)	It comes naturally to children
*Quiero dejar****le*** *un México mejor a mis nietos* (EP, Mex., dialogue)	I want to leave a better Mexico to my grandchildren

(1) Sentences like *él les* (for *le*) *da mucha importancia a las apariencias* '(s)he ascribes a lot of importance to appearances' may sound odd to some speakers. But use of the singular *le* for *les* is technically 'wrong', and should be avoided in formal writing – e.g. in this sentence by omitting the redundant pronoun altogether.

14.10.4 Redundant direct object pronouns

As was said at 14.10.1, a redundant pronoun is usually obligatory when a direct object precedes the verb, as in *las flores* ***las*** *compré ayer* 'I bought the flowers yesterday'. When the direct object *follows* the verb, use of a redundant object pronoun is common with *todo*: *ahora me* ***lo*** *tienes que contar todo* 'now you have to tell me everything'. It is also 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 generally avoided in Spain, but it is common in Latin America in spontaneous speech and also in written language in Argentina:

Le quiere mucho a ese hijo (Spain, familiar)	(S)he loves that son a lot
Morgan también lo mandó llamar a Abdulmalik (JLB, Arg., dialogue; Sp . . . *.mandó llamar a Abdulmalik*)	Morgan also had Abdulmalik sent for
No lo conocen a Perón en Córdoba, lo confunden con un cantante de tangos (JA, Arg., dialogue; Sp. *no conocen*)	They've never heard of Perón in Cordoba. They confuse him with a tango singer
Convénzalo a su amigo de que acepte la beca (MVLl, Pe., dialogue; Sp. *convenza a su amigo . . .*)	Persuade your friend to accept the grant

This is less usual, but not unknown, with non-human direct objects.

14.10.5 Redundant pronouns in relative clauses

Redundant pronouns occur in spoken Spanish in relative clauses to 'resume' or echo a direct or indirect object relative pronoun, especially in non-restrictive clauses (see 'restrictive' in the Glossary), and they may appear in writing, particularly if several words separate the *que* and the verb that depends on it:

Los gramáticos aconsejan muchas cosas que nadie ***las*** *dice* (Sp., informant)	Grammarians recommend lots of things that no one says
Te voy a hacer una confesión que nunca me animé a hacer ***la*** *a nadie* (Latin-American, from Kany, 150)	I'm going to make you a confession I never had the courage to make to anybody
Sólo por ti dejaría a don Memo a quien tanto ***le*** *debo* (CF, Mex., dialogue)	Only for you would I leave Don Memo, whom I owe so much

DeMello (1992), 4, shows that the construction is very widespread, even in quite formal speech in Spain and Latin America, but it may sound uneducated to some, especially in restrictive clauses (the first two examples), and it is best left to native speakers.

15 *Le/les* and *lo/la/los/las*

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- Basic rules for choice between *lo/la/los/las* and *le/les* (Section 15.2)
- The uses of *le/les* as an indirect object pronoun (Section 15.3)
- The uses of *lo/la/los/las* as direct object pronouns (Section 15.4)
- The *le/lo* controversy and regional variants (Section 15.5)
- Use of *le/les* as direct object pronouns in standard Spanish everywhere (Sections 15.6–10)

This chapter is devoted exclusively 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*, *ellos*), see Chapter 12.

15.1 The *le/lo* controversy: summary of the arguments contained in this chapter

The rules governing the correct choice of third-person object pronouns vary a great deal in everyday spoken language throughout the Spanish-speaking world: the 80 pages that the *GDLE* devotes to the subject reveal that spoken usage sometimes even differs between places less than 50 kilometres apart.

However, the situation in the written language is fairly stable, and can be summarized (albeit somewhat over-simplified) as follows:

> the pronoun used for third-person *direct objects*, human and non-human, in more than 90 per cent of the Spanish-speaking world is *lo/la* for the singular and *los/las* for the plural. *Le* and *les* are used for indirect objects as defined at 14.2.2 and 15.3. This scheme is recommended for learners because it usually produces acceptable sentences on both continents.

However, there are exceptions to the above rule – some of them important. They are discussed below in Sections 15.5 and 15.6–10.

15.2 Third-person object pronouns: basic rules

Beginners can apply the following scheme, valid for all of Latin America and acceptable to, though not necessarily preferred by, most Spaniards. These rules will produce correct sentences in over 90 per cent of cases.

Third-person object pronouns

	Direct object	Indirect object
	SINGULAR	
Masculine	*lo*	*le*
Feminine	*la*	*le*
	PLURAL	
Masculine	*los*	*les*
Feminine	*las*	*les*

The following sentences exemplify these rules:

Ángela vio a Antonio Angela saw Antonio	***Lo** vio* She saw him
Antonio vio a Ángela Antonio saw Angela	***La** vio* He saw her
Vio el libro (S)he saw the book	***Lo** vio* (S)he saw it
Vio la casa (S)he saw the house	***La** vio* (S)he saw it
María dijo hola a Juan María said hello to Juan	***Le** dijo hola* She said hello to him
Juan dijo hola a María Juan said hello to María	***Le** dijo hola* He said hello to her
Vio a los hombres (S)he saw the men	***Los** vio* (S)he saw them
Vio a las mujeres (S)he saw the women	***Las** vio* (S)he saw them
Vio los libros (S)he saw the books	***Los** vio* (S)he saw them
Vio las casas (S)he saw the houses	***Las** vio* (S)he saw them
Dijo hola a María y a José (S)he said hello to María and José	***Les** dijo hola* (S)he said hello to them
Dijo hola a María y a Ángela (S)he said hello to Maria and Angela	***Les** dijo hola* (S)he said hello to them

(1) European Spanish, especially in central and northern areas, prefers the form *le* for a singular **human** male direct object: *le vi* 'I saw **him**': see 15.5.1 for details.

(2) Important: *usted* and *ustedes* 'you' (polite) takes third-person object pronouns: *lo vi ayer* 'I saw him/it/you yesterday', *le vi ayer* (Spain) 'I saw you (masc.)/him yesterday', *la vi ayer* 'I saw you/her yesterday' (fem.), *los vi ayer* 'I saw them/you yesterday', *las vi ayer* 'I saw them/you (fem.)/yesterday'. This possibility that a third-person object pronoun may also refer to *usted*(*es*) must be borne in mind since it is not systematically shown in the translations in this book.

15.3 Use of *le/les* as 'indirect object' pronouns: detailed rules

Le/les are often described as third-person 'indirect object' pronouns (*pronombres de complemento indirecto*). But 'indirect object' is a term that covers many meanings in Spanish, and the basic principle underlying the use of *le/les* is that *le/les* can replace any person or thing gaining from **or losing** by the action described in the verb phrase. As we have said more than once elsewhere, in English an indirect object can only gain or receive: we cannot say *'they stole him fifty dollars' but *le robaron cincuenta dólares* is good Spanish.

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*

(In the translations, 'you' appears as a reminder that *lo/los/la/las* and *le/les* can refer to *usted* or *ustedes* as well as to 'him', 'her', 'it' or them'.)

(**a**) Receiving or acquiring any thing, impression or sensation

Le di/mandé la carta	I gave/sent her/him/you the letter
No les dije la verdad	I didn't tell you/them the truth
Le tirábamos bolas de nieve	We were throwing snowballs at him/her/you
Le pusieron una inyección	They gave you/him/her an injection
Esa chaqueta le va	That jacket suits him/her/you
La secretaria le cayó bien	(S)he took a liking to the secretary
Les gusta la miel	They/You like honey

and also words meaning 'to happen to', e.g. *suceder*, *acontecer*, *sobrevenir*, *pasar*: *les sobrevino una tragedia* 'they/you suffered a tragedy', *no le pasó nada* 'nothing happened to him/her/you'.

(**b**) Loss or removal from

Les han robado un millón de pesos	They've stolen a million pesos from them/you
Le están sacando una muela	They're taking one of her/his teeth out
Se le cae el pelo	His/Her hair's falling out
Se le pasa pronto	(S)he gets over it quickly/You get over . . .
No le puedo aceptar tanto dinero	I can't accept so much money from you/him/her

Also, in Latin America, *recibir*: *desolado porque esta/ésta no aceptó recibirle el presente de amor* (popular press, Ch.) 'distraught because she refused to accept the love gift from him', Sp . . . *.esta/ésta se negó a aceptarle el regalo de amor.*

(**c**) Sufficiency, insufficiency, lack, excess

Les basta decir que sí	All they/you have to do is say 'yes'
Le faltan mil pesos	(S)he's/You're 1000 pesos short
Veinte dólares al día le alcanzaban para vivir	(S)he/you were managing to live on 20 dollars a day
El traje de Marco le está grande	Marco's suit is too big for him

(**d**) Requesting, requiring, ordering

Le hicieron varias preguntas	They asked him/her/you several questions
Les pidieron nuestras señas	They asked them/you for our names and addresses
Les rogaron que se sentasen/sentaran	They/You requested them/you to sit down
Les ordenamos rendirse	We ordered them/you to surrender

Compare *le mandó que comprara/comprase pan* '(s)he ordered her/him to buy bread' and *la mandó a comprar pan* '(s)he sent her to buy bread'.

(**e**) Numerous phrases involving *tener* plus an emotion:

Le(s) tengo miedo a los murciélagos (see 14.10.3)	I'm afraid of bats
Ana le tiene ojeriza	Ana has it in for him/her/you
Le tenías un cariño tremendo	You were enormously fond of her/him

(**f**) Numerous set phrases consisting of *hacer* plus a noun

El frío les hacía mucho daño	The cold did them/you a lot of harm
El chico le hizo una mueca	The boy pulled a face at him/her/you
No les hacíamos el menor caso	We didn't give them/you the slightest attention
Tienes que hacerle frente a la realidad	You have to face up to reality
Le hacía falta reflexionar	(S)he/You 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 9.3.4:

¡Le estás pisando los pies!	You're treading on his/her feet!
A esa edad se les ablanda el cerebro	Their brains go soft at that age
Tú no le viste los zapatos que llevaba	You didn't see the shoes (s)he was wearing

(**h**) In a number of less easily classified cases which may all be seen to convey ideas of 'giving', 'removing', 'benefiting', 'involving', 'affecting intimately'

¿Qué le vamos a hacer?	What can be done about it?
No le hace (Southern Cone; Sp. *no viene a cuento*)	That's irrelevant
¡Dale!	Hit him!/Go on!/Get moving!
¡Y dale con el tema!	Oh no, not again! (i.e. we heard it before)
No le oigo nada	I can't hear a thing (s)he's saying
Le agradezco	I thank you
La respuesta del abogado le afectó mucho (see 15.6 for more on this use of *le*)	The lawyer's reply affected him/her a lot

This multiplicity of meanings can give rise to ambiguities: *le compré un vestido* 'I bought a dress from her/for her', *Ángel les robó una manzana* 'Ángel stole an apple from/for them/you'. Context nearly always makes the sense plain, or the sentence can be recast: *compró una calculadora para él* '(s)he bought a calculator for him', etc.

15.4 Uses of *lo/la/los/las*

Lo/la/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.

List B: Contexts normally requiring *lo/la/los/las* (direct object)

The use of *lo* for human males in this list reflects standard Latin-American usage. The second of the alternative forms reflects widespread, preferred, but not obligatory usage in most of Spain: see 15.5.1 for discussion. 'You' in the translation reflects the possibility of *usted/ustedes*.

(**a**) Direct physical actions (although there are a few exceptions, like *le pega* '(s)he beats him/her'; see 15.6.4):

Lo/Le interrogaron	They interrogated him/you
La operaron	They operated on her/you
Coge estos papeles y quémalos	Take these papers and burn them

A usted lo durmieron con algún mejunje en la sidra (JLB, Arg., dialogue; Sp. *le* or *lo*)	They put you to sleep with some potion in the cider

(**b**) Verbs of perception, e.g. 'seeing', 'hearing', 'knowing', etc.

Al director no lo/le conozco	I don't know the director
La vi ayer en el mercado	I saw her/you yesterday in the market
El padre lo miraba con orgullo (IA, Sp., or *le*)	His father gazed at him with pride
A uno de ellos lo identifiqué enseguida (JM, Sp., or *le*)	I identified one of them immediately

(**c**) Praise, blame, admiration, love, hatred and other actions denoting attitudes towards a person or thing:

Sus profesores lo/le alaban	His/her/your teachers praise him/you
A las monjas las envidio mucho	I envy nuns a lot
Su marido la adora	Her/Your husband adores her/you
Yo la quiero mucho	I love her/you a lot

For some speakers *lo quieren* = 'they want him/you/it', *le quieren* = 'they love him/you'.

(**d**) 'Naming', 'nominating', 'describing' (but see 15.6.4 for the verb *llamar*):

Los denominaron "los decadentes"	They named them/you 'the decadents'
Lo/Le nombraron alcalde	They nominated him/you mayor
Las describió en términos cariñosos	(S)he described them/you (fem.) in affectionate terms
Lo calificó de éxito	(S)he described it as a success

(1) *Lo/la/los/las* agree in gender with the noun they stand for. If there is no gendered noun, *lo* is used: *dijo que llegaría a las siete, pero no lo creo* '(s)he said (s)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 8.4.

(2) 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.

15.5 The *le/lo* controversy: general remarks

The use of *le/les* as *direct* object pronouns has always been controversial. Beginners may follow the scheme given in 15.2, but they will come across at least some of the variants described hereafter. Some of these are dialect, but some are basic features of certain varieties of Spanish and foreigners can use them. Section 15.5 describes regional variations. Sections 15.6–10 describes certain subtleties in the use of *le* and *lo* found in the best written and spoken Spanish.

15.5.1 *Le* for *lo* in Spain: further details

Important: the most prestigious styles in Spain, i.e. the variety used in publishing, in most media, and by most speakers in central and northern Spain, favours ***le*** *vi* for *lo vi* when the sentence means 'I saw him' as opposed to 'I saw it':

—¿Has visto a Miguel? —No, no ***le*** *he visto*	'Have you seen Miguel?' 'No, I haven't seen him'
—¿Has visto mi lápiz? —No, no ***lo*** *he visto*	'Have you seen my pencil?' 'No, I haven't seen it'

(1) The Academy has itself changed its mind about this phenomenon more than once in the last 150 years and now accepts this use of *le*.

Students may hear some Spaniards claim that *lo vi* applied to a human male sounds vaguely regional. They will also note much inconsistency in Spain in the use of *le* or *lo* with reference to human males, *lo* being more frequent in the South and not uncommon elsewhere. *El País* (*Libro de estilo* 2014, 13.3.4), accepts the use of *le* for human male direct objects but prefers *lo* because it is used throughout the Spanish-speaking world except northern and central Spain – though even here *lo* is commonly heard.

(2) This use of *le* for *lo* usually sounds incorrect to Latin Americans, but Sections 15.6.1–5 will show that, although less common, the use of *le* in Latin America for human direct objects is in fact more widespread than is often claimed.

(3) It is surprising that feminists have not been more irritated by the fact that in the *leísta* system of central and northern Spain only males are exalted above non-living masculine objects by the use of *le* instead of *lo. La vi* means both 'I saw her' and 'I saw *it*'.

15.5.2 *Les* for *los* in Spain

Use of *les* for *los*, e.g. *les vi* for *los vi* 'I saw them' (masc. or masc. and fem.) is very common in Spain when the pronoun refers to human males, but it is not recommended by the Academy (*NGLE* 16.8j). Careful writers use *los* in sentences like *los vi* 'I saw them', but use of *les* in such contexts is so common in Spain in speech and writing that foreign students need not worry too much about the rule: *les* (for *los*) *llevaron a una casa donde estuvieron encerrados mucho rato* (JB, Spain) 'they took them to a house where they were locked in for a long time', *la colonización les explotó* (PLE, Spain) 'colonization exploited them', *hay mucha evidencia circunstancial y comentarios de gente que les conocía mucho* (RM, Sp.) 'there is plenty of circumstantial evidence and comments from people who knew them well'.

15.5.3 *Le* for *la* in Spain: regional usage

Speakers from north and north-western Spain, especially Navarre and the Basque provinces, often use *le* and *les* for female human direct objects as well as for males: *le vi* = both 'I saw him' and 'I saw her', *les vi* = 'I saw them (females)' but *lo vi* (masc.) and *la vi* (fem.) = 'I saw *it*'. This usage sometimes appears in literature but the Academy disapproves of it (DPD 393) and foreign learners should avoid it. The same phenomenon is sporadically heard elsewhere, e.g. in Valencia and in Paraguay.

15.5.4 *La* for *le* (*a ella*) in Spain (*laísmo*)

People from central Spain, including Madrid, may use *la* for the *indirect* object pronoun to refer to a female:

?*Yo la dije la verdad* (for *yo le dije la verdad*)	I told her the truth
?*Yo la alabo el gusto* (MD, Sp., dialogue, for *yo le alabo el gusto*)	I praise her taste

Schoolteachers have waged war for years on this type of *laísmo* and the Academy rejects it (*NGLE* 16.10c). Foreigners should avoid it.

15.5.5 *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, 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, but it should not be imitated.

15.5.6 *Le* for *lo/la* applied to inanimate objects in Spain

In familiar speech in Madrid, in Quito, Ecuador, 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, Sp., mid-eighteenthth century, for *lo afirman*). This construction is nowadays stigmatized.

15.6 *Le* used for human direct objects throughout the Spanish-speaking world

Even when all the regional and dialectal factors are taken into account, *le* is nevertheless quite often used as a *direct* object pronoun in the best styles in Spain where *la/las* would be expected, and in Latin America where either *lo/los* or *la/las* would be expected.

This can been seen from 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 translations to be (a) *él la halagó*, (b) *la broma la halagó*, and this 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. As a result, although the rules for the use of *le/les* already given at 15.3 and the rules for *lo/la/los/las* given at 15.2 and 15.4 will enable foreign learners to form sentences that are acceptable to the majority of native speakers, they do not always explain the day-to-day use of these pronouns.

15.6.1 *Le* to denote respect (*le de cortesía*)

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 *usted* form 'I saw you'. Argentine informants were convinced that they would say *no quería molestarle* 'I didn't mean to bother you' when speaking to their boss, but *molestarlo* when speaking about him; the *GDLE* 24.5 reports the phenomenon in Chile, Venezuela and Ecuador. Colombian informants said *molestarlo* in both cases.

(1) García (1975) reports that some speakers in Buenos Aires see a difference between *le llevaron al hospital* and *lo llevaron al hospital* 'they took him to the hospital', the former implying that the patient was walking or co-operative, the latter that he was carried; and it seems that some Spaniards also accept the distinction. For Colombian informants only *lo llevaron* was possible and *leísta* Spaniards would usually say only *le llevaron* in both cases.

15.6.2 *Le/les* preferred when the subject of the verb is inanimate

Le or *les* are often the preferred direct object pronouns in Spain and Latin America when they denote a human being and the subject of the verb is non-living. 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 most often used when the human direct object is reacting emotionally, as in sentences like 'it surprised him', 'it shocked her'.

The phenomenon is vividly illustrated in this Peruvian sentence where *le* reflects a lifeless subject (a tooth) with 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* (from *Variedades*, 238) 'if it [the tooth] is troubling you a lot, I can attend to you today'. Further examples:

Le *amargaba la idea de haber estrangulado las palabras que estaba a punto de dirigirle* (CC, Sp.)	She was embittered by the idea of having choked back (lit. 'strangled') the words that she was about to say to him
Él se miraba la sangre que ***le*** *había salpicado* (MVLl, Pe.)	He looked at the blood that had spattered him
Sin embargo, ***le*** *molestaba encararse con Parodi* (JLB, Arg.)	Yet it troubled him to come face to face with Parodi
Le *encantaría recibirlo en su casa* (ES, Mex., dialogue)	He'd be delighted to receive you at his home

The following pairs further illustrate the rule:

La angustia le acompañaba siempre	Anguish went with her/him 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
Le alcanzan mil euros para vivir	1000 euros are 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

(1) The following verbs are also especially likely to be affected: *acometer* 'to assail' (doubts, etc.), *afligir* 'to afflict' (pain, etc.), *asustar* 'to frighten', *ayudar* 'to help', *calmar* 'to calm', *coger* 'to catch', *complacer* 'to please', *convencer* 'to convince', *distraer* 'to amuse'/'distract', *encantar* 'to enchant'/'charm', *estorbar* 'to impede'/'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.

(2) The rules given in this section reflect usage in Spain, the Southern Cone and Mexico, but many native speakers do not exploit all the potential of these subtleties so they may disagree about the correct pronoun to use. Strongly *loísta* speakers, e.g. Colombians, may use *lo/la* where others prefer *le*.

15.6.3 Preference for *le/les* after impersonal *se* (see 32.5 for this construction)

If impersonal *se* precedes a third-person object pronoun there is a widespread tendency to prefer *le/les* when the object is human.

Se ***le*** *notaba tímida y cortada* (LG, Sp.)	One could see she was timid and embarrassed
Entonces se ***le*** *leerá como se* ***le*** *debió leer siempre . . .* (MVLl, Pe.),	Then he will be read as he always should have been read . . .
Hola doctor, ¡qué bien se le ve! (Peruvian speaker, *Variedades* 238)	Hello, doctor, you're looking well!
Se le nota triste (JH, Mex., dialogue)	She seems sad/You can see she's sad

(1) Use of *le/les* for the direct object removes the ambiguities caused in Spanish by the shortage of distinctive object pronoun forms. Use of *lo/la* after *se* invites us to read *se* as a substitute for *le* by the strong rule that two object pronouns beginning with *l* cannot occur side by side (14.9). Thus *le cortaron la cabeza* 'they cut his/her head off' is pronominalized *se la cortaron* 'they cut it off (him/her)' (*never *le la cortaron*!). For this reason *se la notaba pálida* may suggest '(s)he noticed that his/her/their hand, face, head, cheek, chin (or some other feminine noun) was pale'; *se le notaba* shows that the whole person is meant.

(2) Use of *la* after impersonal *se* to refer to a female and of *lo* to refer to a male is not, however, impossible: *la luz se apagó y apenas se lo veía* (MVLl, Pe.) 'the light went out and one could scarcely see him', *se lo veía pálido en las fotos* (JM, Sp.) 'he looked pale in the photographs', *—No se* ***le*** *acusa de ningún hecho—. Y entonces ¿de qué se* ***lo*** *acusa?* (interview *La Nación*, Arg.) '"He's not being accused of any action." "What is he being accused of then?"'(both forms used).

(3) In Spain *le/les* is occasionally seen even for non-human direct objects after impersonal *se*, although in this example *los* would have been more usual and more correct: *a los esperpentos de Valle-Inclán siempre se les ha considerado ejemplos de expresionismo español* (ABV, Sp.) 'Valle-Inclán's *esperpentos* have always been considered examples of Spanish expressionism'.

(4) The verb *llevarse* encourages use of *lo* for human and non-human direct objects. Most informants from the strongly *leísta* regions of Madrid, Segovia and Valladolid preferred *lo* to *le* in *se rompió una pierna y se lo/le llevaron al hospital en ambulancia* 'he broke a leg and they took him to hospital in an ambulance' (*lo* 75%, *le* 25%); *a mi padre me lo/le voy a llevar a pasar las vacaciones con nosotros* 'I'm going to take my father on vacation with us' (*lo* 62%, *le* 38%). This is apparently a peculiarity of the verb *llevar*: *le* is reserved for the meaning 'carry *to* him/her', and *lo* for the meaning 'to take' as in *se lo llevó a casa* '(s)he took it home'.

15.6.4 *Le/les* preferred with certain verbs

Some verbs usually take *le* for what English-speakers probably would take to be their direct object when this object is human. This removes some of the ambiguities of the Spanish object pronoun system or it may clarify the meaning of the verb (see, for instance, *pegar*):

Creer 'to believe': *yo no le creo, señora*, 'Señora, I don't believe you', but *sí que lo creo* 'I *do* believe it'.

Discutir 'to argue'/'to discuss', when it means 'to answer back': *¿desde cuándo le discutía?* 'since when had she been answering him back?' (MVLl, Per., dialogue).

Enseñar 'to teach'/'to show': *les enseñaba* '(s)he taught them (human direct object)/showed them' but *lo enseñaba* '(s)he showed it/taught it'.

Entender 'to understand': *no le entiendo* 'I don't understand him/her/you' but *lo entiendo* 'I understand it'.

Gustar/agradar/complacer/placer 'to please', and all verbs of similar or opposite meaning: *le gusta la miel* '(s)he/it likes/you like honey', *le disgustaba encontrarse sola* 'she disliked finding herself alone'.

Importar 'to matter', ***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 'to interest': *por si le interesa, estudié en la escuela Mártires de Tacubaya* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'in case you're interested, I studied at the Martyrs of Tacubaya school'.

Llamar 'to call'. Many speakers prefer *le/les* when the verb means 'to give a name', although *lo/la* are also common: *por eso le llaman mami* (ABV, Sp., dialogue) 'that's why they call her "mummy"', *se nos informó en un "briefing", que le llaman* (TV interview, Cu.) 'we were told in a "briefing", as they call it'; but this usage is not universal: *al más alegre lo llamaban el Trompo* (GGM, Col.) 'they called the most cheerful one "Spinning Top"'. For christening, educated usage says *le pusieron de nombre María* 'they called her "María"'.

La/lo/(le)/los/las are the usual object pronouns used when the verb means 'phone' or 'call': *yo la llamaré apenas haya alguna novedad* 'I'll call you/her as soon as there's news', but *le* is possible: *ella le llamó ocho veces* (EM, Mex., dialogue) 'she called him eight times'. *Telefonear* takes *le/les*.

Obedecer 'to obey': *¿**le** han obedecido a Mademoiselle Durand?* 'did you obey Mlle Durand?' (EP, Mex., dialogue), although the verb is also found with *la/lo*.

Pegar 'to beat': *. . . con maridos que les pegan* (JEP, Mex.) '. . . with husbands that beat them', *¿le pegarías a una mujer?* (EM, Mex., dialogue) 'would you hit a woman?'. *Pegarlo/pegarla*, etc., is assumed to mean 'to stick (i.e. glue) it'.

La pegaba for '(s)he beat her' is heard in familiar language, cf. *luego él cambió y le daba achares y la pegaba* (RM, Sp.) 'then he changed and made her jealous and hit her', *la insultaba y la pegaba* (SP, Sp.) 'he insulted her and hit her'. The *NGLE* 41.2e considers this 'rustic'.

Preocupar, ***inquietar*** 'to worry': *le preocupa* 'it worries him/her/you'.

Recordar: when it means 'to remind': *la recuerdo* 'I remember her', but *recuérdale que viene esta noche* 'remind her/him that (s)he's coming tonight'.

Tirar when it means 'to pull' rather than to 'throw' or 'throw away': *la amiga le tiraba de la mano* (JM, Sp.) 'his/her friend was pulling her/him/you by the hand'. Compare *lo/la tiró* '(s)he threw it/(s)he 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* '(s)he touched you, Señora'.

15.6.5 *Le/les* in double accusative constructions

In *Juan la oyó* 'John heard her' *la* is normal. In 'John heard her sing an aria' there are two objects, one non-living, 'aria', which is obviously less active than the other human object 'her'. Spanish speakers tend to 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). Questionnaires, based on examples from García (1975), elicited the following replies from 20 educated *madrileños*, which confirmed García's finding with Latin-American-speakers: *María no quería venir, pero. . . obligamos a venir* (*la* 70%, *le* 30%) 'Maria didn't want to come, but we obliged her to come' (single accusative); *pobre María, su padre siempre. . . obliga a decir la verdad* (*la* 35%, *le* 65%) 'poor Maria, her father always obliges her to tell the truth' (two objects, 'her' and *la verdad*).

(1) *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'.

(2) *Dejar* 'to let' tends to take *la* (and in Latin America *lo*) when the following infinitive is intransitive: *lo/la dejaron ir* 'they let him/her go' (*le dejaron* for 'him' in *leísta* Spain). If the infinitive is transitive *le* is more frequent: *le dejaron comprar un helado* 'they let him/her buy an ice cream'. The same is true of *hacer*: *la hice bajar a su estudio* 'I made her go down to her study' but *le hice tomar un café* 'I made her/him drink a coffee' (from DPD 194).

Permitir takes *le*: *le permitieron hacerlo*.

15.7 Pronouns with verbs of motion

For *acude a ella* '(s)he goes to her', *se les acercó* '(s)he approached them', see 14.6.1.

15.8 'Resumptive' or 'echoing' *lo* with *ser*, *estar* and *haber*

The predicate of *ser*, *estar*, *parecer* and *haber* is resumed or 'echoed' by *lo*: *parecía italiana y* ***lo*** *era* 'she looked Italian, and she was'. See 8.4.2 and 34.2.2 for details.

15.9 *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 14.9.

15.10 Latin America *se los* for *se lo*

For the very frequent colloquial Latin-American form ?*se los dije* 'I told them/you (plural)', for the standard *se lo dije a ellos/ellas/ustedes*, see 14.9.2.

15.11 *Le* for *les*

For the universal colloquial tendency to use *le* for *les* when the latter is a 'redundant' pronoun, as in *siempre le digo la verdad a mis padres* 'I always tell my parents the truth', for *les digo la verdad*, see 14.10.3.

16 Forms of Spanish verbs

This chapter discusses the following topics:

- The three conjugations (Section 16.1.1)
- Overview of the Spanish verb system (Section 16.2)
- The conjugation of regular verbs (Section 16.3)
- Spelling changes affecting all verbs (Section 16.4)
- Irregular verbs: introduction (Section 16.5)
- Radical-changing verbs (Section 16.6)
- Notes on the various verb forms (Section 16.7)
- Regional variations affecting verbs (Section 16.8)
- Verbs and the written accent (Section 16.9)
- Verbs ending in *-cer* or *-cir* (Section 16.10)
- Forms of model irregular and radical-changing verbs (Section 16.11)
- List of irregular verbs (Section 16.12)
- Formation of the compound tenses: an example (Section 16.13)

Readers of this book should already know the forms of the regular verbs and of the most important irregular verbs, but they are listed in this chapter for the sake of completeness.

Argentine *vos* forms are mentioned since they are standard usage in that country and normal in some other places. See 12.3.1 for details.

(1) Important: the translations of verbs listed in this chapter usually show only the most obvious meanings. Many of the verbs have several meanings which must be sought in a good dictionary.

16.1 The three conjugations

Spanish verbs belong to one of three conjugations or verb-types, distinguished by the vowel of the infinitive: (1) *-ar* (2) *-er* (3) *-ir*, or *-ír* in the case of the verbs listed at 16.6.6. The full conjugation of three typical regular verbs in *-ar*, *-er* and *-ir* is shown at 16.3.

16.2 Overview of the Spanish verb system

(a) Important: there are important, predictable spelling changes that affect certain verbs, regular and irregular. They are discussed at 16.4.

(b) Important: *vosotros* forms are not used in Latin-American Spanish: *ustedes* forms replace them in speech and writing. Students of Latin-American Spanish will not need to use *vosotros* forms, but they are constantly used in Spain.

(c) Important: all compound tenses (*he hablado*, *habían visto*, etc.) are formed with the auxiliary *haber* (see 16.11.22) and the past participle. The latter is invariable in form in these tenses, unlike in French and Italian. For an example of the conjugation of the compound tenses see 16.13.

(d) The future subjunctive is almost obsolete. See 16.7.7 and 20.9.

16.3 Conjugation of regular verbs

The three verbs *hablar* 'to speak', *comer* 'to eat' and *vivir* 'to live' are completely regular and are not affected by any spelling changes: they must be learned first. The *-ir* conjugation differs from the *-er* conjugation only in the forms shown in bold type:

Stem	***habl-***	***com-***	***viv-***
Infinitive	*hablar*	*comer*	*viv**ir***
Gerund	*hablando*	*comiendo*	*viviendo*
Past participle	*hablado*	*comido*	*vivido*
Imperative			
(*tú*)	*habla*	*come*	*vive*
(*vos*)	*hablá*	*comé*	*viv**í*** (Argentine forms: see 12.3.1)
(*vosotros/as*)	*hablad*	*comed*	*viv**id*** (Spain only)
(*usted*)	*hable*	*coma*	*viva*
(*ustedes*)	*hablen*	*coman*	*vivan*

INDICATIVE (i.e. non-subjunctive) FORMS. Their use is discussed in Chapter 17.

Present

The bracketed forms are Argentine *vos* forms: see 16.7.1.

hablo	*hablamos*	*como*	*comemos*	*vivo*	*viv**imos***
hablas (hablás)	*habláis*	*comes (comés)*	*coméis*	*vives (vivís)*	*viv**ís***
habla	*hablan*	*come*	*comen*	*vive*	*viven*

Perfect (see 16.13)

See 16.11.22 for the conjugation of *haber.*

he hablado, etc. *he comido*, etc. *he vivido*, etc.

Imperfect

hablaba	*hablábamos*	*comía*	*comíamos*	*vivía*	*vivíamos*
hablabas	*hablabais*	*comías*	*comíais*	*vivías*	*vivíais*
hablaba	*hablaban*	*comía*	*comían*	*vivía*	*vivían*

Preterite

hablé	*hablamos*	*comí*	*comimos*	*viví*	*vivimos*
hablaste	*hablasteis*	*comiste*	*comisteis*	*viviste*	*vivisteis*
habló	*hablaron*	*comió*	*comieron*	*vivió*	*vivieron*

Pluperfect (see 16.13)

había hablado, *comido*, *vivido*, etc.

***Pretérito anterior* (rarely used. See 16.13)**

hube hablado, *comido*, *vivido*, etc.

Future

hablaré	*hablaremos*	*comeré*	*comeremos*	*viv**iré***	*viv**ir**emos*
hablarás	*hablaréis*	*comerás*	*comeréis*	*viv**irás***	*viv**iréis***
hablará	*hablarán*	*comerá*	*comerán*	*viv**irá***	*viv**irán***

Future perfect (see 16.13)

habré hablado, *comido*, *vivido*, etc.

Conditional

hablaría	*hablaríamos*	*comería*	*comeríamos*	*vivi**r**ía*	*vivi**r**íamos*
hablarías	*hablaríais*	*comerías*	*comeríais*	*vivi**r**ías*	*vivi**r**íais*
hablaría	*hablarían*	*comería*	*comerían*	*vivi**r**ía*	*vivi**r**ían*

Perfect conditional (see 16.13)

habría hablado, *comido*, *vivido*, etc.

SUBJUNCTIVE (discussed in Chapter 20)

Present subjunctive

hable	*hablemos*	*coma*	*comamos*	*viva*	*vivamos*
hables	*habléis*	*comas*	*comáis*	*vivas*	*viváis*
hable	*hablen*	*coma*	*coman*	*viva*	*vivan*

See 20.12.5 for the subjunctive forms preferred in Argentina, where the pronoun *vos* is used instead of *tú*.

Perfect subjunctive (See 16.13)

haya hablado, *haya comido*, *haya vivido*, etc.

Imperfect subjunctive

Spanish has two forms of the imperfect subjunctive, more or less interchangeable (see 20.1.3)

(**a**) *-ra* form

hablara	*habláramos*	*comiera*	*comiéramos*	*viviera*	*viviéramos*
hablaras	*hablarais*	*comieras*	*comierais*	*vivieras*	*vivierais*
hablara	*hablaran*	*comiera*	*comieran*	*viviera*	*vivieran*

(**b**) *-se* form

hablase	*hablásemos*	*comiese*	*comiésemos*	*viviese*	*viviésemos*
hablases	*hablaseis*	*comieses*	*comieseis*	*vivieses*	*vivieseis*
hablase	*hablasen*	*comiese*	*comiesen*	*viviese*	*viviesen*

Pluperfect subjunctive (see 16.13)

hubiera hablado, *comido*, *vivido*, etc.
hubiese hablado, *comido*, *vivido*, etc.

Future subjunctive (more or less obsolete, see 20.9)

hablare	*habláremos*	*comiere*	*comiéremos*	*viviere*	*viviéremos*
hablares	*hablareis*	*comieres*	*comiereis*	*vivieres*	*viviereis*
hablare	*hablaren*	*comiere*	*comieren*	*viviere*	*vivieren*

16.4 Spelling changes affecting verbs

The spelling rules described in this section apply to all Spanish verbs.

16.4.1 Infinitive ends in *-zar*

Z is written *c* before *e*: *rezo* 'I pray', *recé* 'I prayed', *recemos* 'let us pray', etc.

16.4.2 Infinitive ends in *-car* or *-quir*

C is written *qu* before *e*: *saco* 'I take out', *saqué* 'I took out', *saquemos* 'let's take out', etc.

(1) If the infinitive ends in *-quir*, *qu* is written *c* before *o* or *a*: *delinquir* 'to commit a crime', *delinco* 'I commit a crime', etc. *Delinquir* is used in formal styles, but the other verbs ending in *-quir* are rarely seen or heard.

16.4.3 Infinitive ends in *-gar*

G is written *gu* before *e*: *pago* 'I pay', *pagué* 'I paid', *paguemos* 'let's pay', etc.

16.4.4 Infinitive ends in *-guar*

Averiguar 'to find out', *aguar* 'to water down'/'to spoil' (a party/fun), *apaciguar* 'to pacify/placate' and other verbs ending in *-guar* are conjugated as regular *-ar* verbs and the *u* is never stressed (i.e. it is always pronounced /w/). But a dieresis (two dots) is written over the *u* before a following *e* in order to preserve the pronunciation /gw/. The only forms with a dieresis are (bracketed forms are unaffected):

- Imperative: (*usted*) *averig**ü**e*, (*ustedes*) *averig**ü**en*
- Preterite: *averig**ü**é*, (*averiguaste*), (*averiguó*), (*averiguamos*), (*averiguasteis*), (*averiguaron*)
- Present subjunctive: *averig**ü**e*, *averig**ü**es*, *averig**ü**e*, *averig**ü**emos*, *averig**ü**éis*, *averig**ü**en*

16.4.5 Infinitive ends in *-cuar*

See 16.9.3.

16.4.6 Infinitive ends in *-ger* or *-gir*

G is written *j* before *o* or *a*: *proteger* 'to protect', *protejo* 'I protect', *protejamos* 'let's protect', etc. *Fingir* 'to pretend', *finjo* 'I pretend', *finjamos* 'let's pretend', etc.

16.4.7 Infinitive ends in *-guir*

Gu is written *g* before *o* or *a*: *seguir* 'to follow', *sigo* 'I follow', *sigamos* 'let's follow'.

This affects the verbs *erguir*, *conseguir*, *seguir*, *perseguir* and *proseguir*, all of which are irregular in other ways: see 16.6.5.

16.4.8 Infinitive ends in *-cer*

Most of these verbs have a slight irregularity. See 16.10.1 for a discussion.

16.4.9 Infinitive ends in *-cir*

These also may have a slight irregularity, see 16.10.2.

16.4.10 Infinitive ends in *-ñer, ñir, -llir*

ie is written *e* and *ió* is written *ó* after *ñ* or *ll*. The combinations **ñie, *ñió, *llie, *llió* do not occur in Spanish:

tañer *'to chime'*	***gruñir*** *'to grunt'*	***zambullirse*** *'to dive'*
*tañ**e**ndo*	*gruñ**e**ndo*	*zambull**é**ndose*
*tañ**ó***	*gruñ**ó***	*se zambull**ó***
*tañ**e**ron*	*gruñ**e**ron*	*se zambull**e**ron*
*tañ**e**ra*	*gruñ**e**ra*	*se zambull**e**ra,* etc.
*tañ**e**se*	*gruñ**e**se*	*se zambull**e**se,* etc.

16.4.11 Infinitive ends in *-eer, -uir, -aer, -oer*

When unstressed *i* appears between two vowels it is written -y-.

See *poseer* 'to possess' 16.11.36, *construir* 'to build' 16.11.13, *traer* 'to bring' 16.11.47, *roer* 'to gnaw' 16.11.41. This rule also applies to *oír* 'to hear' 16.11.29. Examples *construyendo*, *trayendo*, *oyendo*, etc.

16.5 Irregular verbs: general remarks

Only about two dozen Spanish verbs – not counting verbs formed from them – are traditionally defined as truly irregular. These are:

andar to walk 16.11.5
asir to seize (rarely used) 16.11.6
caber to fit into 16.11.8
caer to fall (and some compounds) 16.11.9
dar to give 16.11.15
decir to say (and a few compounds) 16.11.16
estar to be 16.11.21
haber auxiliary verb or 'there is/are' 16.11.22
hacer to do/to make 16.11.23
ir to go 16.11.24
oír to hear 16.11.29
poder to be able 16.11.34
poner to put (and several compounds) 16.11.35
producir to produce (and all verbs ending in *–ducir*) 16.11.37
querer to want 16.11.38
saber to know 16.11.42
salir to go out 16.11.43
ser to be 16.11.45
tener to have (and several compounds) 16.11.46
traer to bring (and a few compounds) 16.11.47
valer to be worth (and compounds) 16.11.48
venir to come (and compounds) 16.11.49
ver to see 16.11.50

16.6 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' is conjugated like *contar* 'to count'/'to tell a story'. Radical-changing verbs have regular endings, but a vowel in the stem is modified in some forms, cf. *contar* 'to tell a story' > *c**ue**nta* '(s)he tells', *perder* 'to lose' > *p**ie**rdo* 'I lose', *sentir* 'to feel' > *s**ie**nte* '(s)he feels' > *s**i**ntió* '(s)he felt', etc.

These verbs must be learned separately since their infinitive is no guide to whether they are radical-changing. Compare *renovar* 'to renovate' and *tender a* 'to tend to', which are radical-changing verbs, and *innovar* 'to innovate', *pretender* 'to claim/intend' which are not.

The following list shows the common types of radical-changing verbs and a selection of verbs that occur constantly and should be learned first.

16.6.1 Conjugated like *contar* 'to tell'/'to count', 16.11.14

Acordarse de 'to remember', *acostarse* 'to go to bed', *apostar* 'to bet', *aprobar* 'to approve', *avergonzarse* 'to be ashamed', *colarse* 'to slip through'/'to gate-crash', *colgar* 'to hang', *comprobar* 'to check', *consolar* 'to console', *costar* 'to cost', *demostrar* 'to demonstrate' (a fact or technique), *desaprobar* 'to disapprove', *encontrar* 'to find'/'to meet', *esforzarse* 'to make an effort', *mostrar* 'to show', *probar* 'to prove'/'to try' (i.e. 'to sample'/'to test'), *recordar* 'to remember'/'to remind', *renovar* 'to renew', *rodar* 'to roll'/'to make a film', *soltar* 'to release'/'let out', *sonar* 'to sound', *soñar* 'to dream', *tronar* 'to thunder', *volar* 'to fly'.

16.6.2 Conjugated like *cerrar* 'to close', 16.11.11

Acertar 'to get right'/'to hit the mark', *apretar* 'to squeeze/tighten', *atravesar* 'to cross', *calentar* 'to heat', *comenzar* 'to begin', *confesar* 'to confess', *despertar*(*se*) 'to wake up', *empezar* 'to begin', *encerrar* 'to lock/shut in', *enterrar* 'to bury', *gobernar* 'to govern', *helar* 'to freeze' (liquids), *manifestarse* 'to demonstrate' (i.e. protest), *negar* 'to deny', *nevar* 'to snow', *pensar* 'to think', *recomendar* 'to recommend', *sentarse* 'to sit down', *temblar* 'to tremble', *tropezar* 'to stumble'.

16.6.3 Conjugated like *mover* 'to move', 16.11.28

Desenvolver 'to unwrap', *devolver* 'to give back', *disolver* 'to dissolve', *doler* 'to hurt', *envolver* 'to wrap up', *llover* 'to rain', *morder* 'to bite', *oler* 'to smell' (see 16.11.30), *remover* 'to stir up' (Lat. Am. 'to remove'), *resolver* 'to resolve', *soler* 'to be accustomed to' (+ infinitive), *volver*(*se*) 'to return'/'to become'.

(1) Verbs ending in *-olver* have an irregular past participle: *vuelto*, *devuelto*, *resuelto*, etc.

16.6.4 Conjugated like *perder* 'to lose', 16.11.32

Atender 'to attend' (i.e. pay attention), *defender* 'to defend', *encender* 'to light/set fire to', *entender* 'to understand', *extenderse* 'to extend/stretch' (over a distance), *tender a* 'to tend to'.

16.6.5 Conjugated like *pedir* 'to ask for', 16.11.31

Competir 'to compete', *concebir* 'to conceive', *conseguir* 'to achieve'/'to manage', *corregir* 'to correct', *derretirse* 'to melt', *despedir* 'to say goodbye to', *elegir* 'to elect'/'to choose', *gemir* 'to groan', *impedir* 'to hinder'/'to impede', *medir* 'to measure', *perseguir* 'to persecute'/'to chase', *proseguir* 'to continue' (a course of action), *rendirse* 'to surrender', *repetir* 'to repeat', *reñir* 'to scold' (see 16.11.40), *seguir* 'to follow', *servir* 'to serve'/'to be useful', *vestir*(*se*) 'to wear'/'to dress'.

16.6.6 Conjugated like *reír* 'to laugh', 16.11.39

Desleír(*se*) 'to dissolve/melt', *engreírse* 'to grow conceited', (*re*)*freír* 'to fry', *sonreír* 'to smile'.

16.6.7 Conjugated like *sentir* 'to feel', 16.11.44

advertir 'to warn', *arrepentirse* 'to repent', *consentir* 'to consent', *convertir* 'to convert', *convertirse en* 'to turn into', *desmentir* 'to deny', *disentir* 'to dissent', *divertir*(*se*) 'to amuse oneself', *herir* 'to wound', *interferir* 'to interfere', *invertir* 'to invest', *mentir* 'to tell lies', *preferir* 'to prefer', *referirse a* 'to refer to', *sugerir* 'to suggest'.

16.6.8 ***dormir*** **'to sleep' and** ***morir*** **'to die', 16.11.18**

16.6.9 ***jugar*** **'to play', 16.11.25**

16.6.10 ***adquirir*** **'to acquire', 16.11.3**

16.6.11 **Conjugated like** ***discernir*** **'to discern', 16.11.17**

cernir 'to sieve' (*cernirse* = 'to hover'/'to loom'), *concernir* 'to concern' (third-person only).

16.6.12 **Radical-changing verbs that are sometimes or often regular**

(**a**) A few verbs are uncertain or have become regular. These include: *cimentar* 'to cement', conjugated like *cerrar* or, more usually, regular. *Derrocar* 'to overthrow' is nowadays regular. *Mentar* 'to mention' is increasingly made regular but educated usage still prefers to conjugate it like *cerrar. Plegar* 'to fold' is conjugated like *cerrar* or is optionally regular.

(**b**) The following variant meanings are noteworthy: *apostar* means 'to post a sentry' when regular but when conjugated like *contar* means 'to bet'. *Aterrar* is regular when it means 'to terrorize', but is conjugated like *cerrar* when it means 'to flatten'/'to raze to the ground' (rare). *Asolar* means 'to parch' when regular but conjugated like *contar* it means 'to level/raze to ground' (nowadays often always regular).

16.7 Notes on the various tense forms

These sections emphasize the predictable features of verbs and may assist the learning process.

Unless otherwise mentioned, Argentine *vos* forms are the same as the standard *tú* forms.

16.7.1 **Forms of the present indicative**

The endings of the present indicative of regular verbs and of all but a few irregular verbs are shown at 16.3. 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' > *produ**zc**o* 'I produce', *poner* 'to put' > *pon**g**o* 'I put', etc. These must be learned separately.

(1) Important: four irregular verbs have a first-person singular ending in *-y*: *dar* 'to give' > *doy*, *estar* 'to be' > *estoy*, *ir* 'to go' > *voy*, *ser* 'to be' > *soy*.

(2) The Argentine *vos* forms of the present indicative tense are made by dropping any *unaccented i* from the ending of the European Spanish *vosotros form: vosotros habláis* > *vos hablás* 'you speak', *vosotros sois* > *vos sos* 'you are', *vosotros teméis* > *vos temés* 'you fear'; but *vosotros vivís* > *vos vivís* 'you live', *vosotros decís* > *vos decís* 'you say'. The verb forms used with vos in other areas of *voseo*, e.g. much of Central America, may differ slightly from the Argentine forms and should be learned locally.

16.7.2 **Forms of the imperfect indicative**

The endings of the imperfect indicative are shown at 16.3. These endings are added to the stem left after removing the infinitive ending. There are only three exceptions:

ser 'to be': *era*, *eras*, *era*, *éramos*, *erais*, *eran*
ir 'to go': *iba*, *ibas*, *iba*, *íbamos*, *ibais*, *iban*
ver 'to see': *veía*, *veías*, *veía*, *veíamos*, *veíais*, *veían* (not the expected* *vía*, **vías*, etc.)

16.7.3 Forms of the preterite (US 'preterit') tense

The endings of the preterite tense (*tú* and *vos*) of regular and radical-changing verbs are shown at 16.3.

(1) Important: the third-person plural ending is *-**e**ron* (not *-ieron*) in the case of the preterite of:

- ***conducir*** 'to drive', and all verbs whose infinitive ends in *-ducir*: *conduj**e**ron*, *redujeron*
- ***decir*** 'to say': *dij**e**ron*
- ***ser*** and ***ir*** 'to be' and 'to go': *fu**e**ron*
- ***traer*** 'to bring': *traj**e**ron*

and all verbs whose infinitive ends in *-ñir*, *-ñer* or *–llir*: see 16.4.10.

(2) Important: most of the irregular verbs listed at 16.5 have irregular preterite stems and many of them have unexpected first-person and third-person singular endings with no accent on the final vowel. *Hacer* 'to do' and *traer* 'to bring' are typical: *hacer*: *hic**e***, *hiciste*, *hiz**o***, *hicimos*, *hicisteis*, *hicieron*; *traer*: *traj**e***, *trajiste*, *traj**o***, *trajimos*, *trajisteis*, *trajeron*.

(3) Important: verbs conjugated like *sentir* 'to feel', *pedir* 'to ask', and *dormir* 'to sleep' have irregularities in the third person of the preterite and therefore in the imperfect subjunctives:

*s**i**ntió* > *s**i**ntieron*	*p**i**dió* > *p**i**dieron*	*d**u**rmió* > *d**u**rmieron*
*s**i**ntiera/s**i**ntiese*	*p**i**diera/p**i**diese*	*d**u**rmiera/d**u**rmiese*

(4) The forms used with *vos* are the same as the standard *tú* forms, but see 16.8.1c for a popular and stigmatized tendency to add *-s* to the second-person singular forms.

16.7.4 Forms of the future and the conditional

The endings for the future and the conditional tenses (*tú* and *vos*) are the same for all verbs, regular and irregular: they are shown at 16.3. These endings are added to the infinitive except in the cases of the following 12 verbs which have a special future/conditional stem, shown in bold:

caber 'to fit in': ***cabr-***	*poder* 'to be able': ***podr-***	*salir* 'to go out': ***saldr-***
decir 'to say': ***dir-***	*poner* 'to put': ***pondr-***	*tener* 'to have': ***tendr-***
haber (aux. verb): ***habr-***	*querer* 'to want': ***querr-***	*valer* 'to be worth': ***valdr-***
hacer 'to do/make': ***har-***	*saber* 'to know': ***sabr-***	*venir* 'to come': ***vendr-***

Example: Future: *haré*, *harás*, *hará*, *haremos*, *haréis*, *harán.* Conditional: *haría*, *harías*, *haría*, *haríamos*, *haríais*, *harían*.

16.7.5 Forms of the present subjunctive

The endings of the present subjunctive are easily memorized:

-ar verbs: the endings are the same as those of the present indicative of regular *-er* verbs except that the first-person ending is *-e*: *habl**e***, *hables*, *hable*, *hablemos*, *habléis*, *hablen*.

-er and ***-ir***: the endings are the same as those of the present indicative of regular *-ar* verbs, except that the first-person ending is *-a. com**a**/viv**a***, *comas/vivas*, *coma/viva*, *comamos/vivamos*, *comáis/viváis*, *coman/vivan*.

(1) Important: as far as regular verbs and most irregular verbs are concerned, these 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*, 16.11.8), etc. There are six exceptions:

dar 'to give'	*dé*, *des*, *dé*, *demos*, *deis*, *den*. (the accent on *dé* distinguishes it from *de* 'of')
estar 'to be'	*esté*, *estés*, *esté*, *estemos*, *estéis*, *estén*
haber	*haya*, *hayas*, *haya*, *hayamos*, *hayáis*, *hayan*
ir 'to go'	*vaya*, *vayas*, *vaya*, *vayamos*, *vayáis*, *vayan*
saber 'to know'	*sepa*, *sepas*, *sepa*, *sepamos*, *sepáis*, *sepan*
ser 'to be'	*sea*, *seas*, *sea*, *seamos*, *seáis*, *sean*

(2) In the case of radical-changing verbs, the usual vowel changes occur, e.g. *c**ue**nte*, *c**ue**ntes*, *c**ue**nte*, *contemos*, *contéis*, *c**ue**nten* (from *contar*; see 16.11.14), *pida*, *pidas*, *pida*, etc. (from *pedir*; see 16.11.31). Verbs like *sentir* 'to feel' have another irregularity in the present subjunctive: *sienta*, *sientas*, *sienta*, *s**i**ntamos*, *s**i**ntáis*, *sientan*. This verb must not be confused with *sentar/sentarse* 'to seat'/'to sit down' which is conjugated like *cerrar*.

Morir 'to die' and *dormir* 'to sleep' also show extra irregularities in the present subjunctive. See 16.11.18 for details.

(3) In Argentina, and even more so in Uruguay, the *vos* forms of the present subjunctive used by careful speakers are the same as the standard *tú* forms of the present subjunctive. See 20.12.5 for a discussion of this point.

16.7.6 Forms of the imperfect subjunctive

There are two sets of imperfect subjunctive endings: the imperfect subjunctive in *-ra* and the imperfect subjunctive in *-se*. They are shown at 16.3. When used as subjunctive forms, these two sets of forms are interchangeable, the *-ra* form being more common, but there are some differences between their other uses: see 20.1.3.

The imperfect subjunctive endings are always 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 hablara/hablase*, *tú hablaras/hablases*, *él hablara/hablase*, etc. But in the case of irregular verbs the preterite stem is often irregular, e.g.

Infinitive	**Preterite stem**	**Imperfect subjunctives**
sentir 'to feel' and verbs like it	*sint*(*ió*)	*sintiera/sintiese*, etc.
pedir 'to request' and verbs like it	*pid*(*ió*)	*pidiera/pidiese*, etc.
ser 'be'	*fu*(*e*)	*fuera/fuese*, etc.
producir 'to produce', and all verbs ending in *-ducir*	*produj*(*o*)	*produjera/produjese*, etc.
tener 'to have'	*tuv*(*o*)	*tuviera/tuviese*, etc.

(1) *Morir* and *dormir* have the third-person preterite stems *m**u**r*(*ió*) and *d**u**rm*(*ió*), so the past subjunctives are *muriera/muriese*, *durmiera/durmiese*, etc.

(2) The forms *-**e**se*, *-**e**ra*, etc., not *-iese*, *-iera*, are used with the following verbs:

decir 'to say'	*dijera/dijese*, etc.
ser 'to be'	*fuera/fuese*, etc.
traer 'to bring'	*trajera/trajese*, etc.

all verbs whose infinitive ends in *-ducir*	*condujera*, *produjese*, etc.
all verbs whose infinitive ends in *-ñer*, *-ñir* or *-llir*	*tañese*, *bullera*, etc.

16.7.7 Forms of the future subjunctive

The future subjunctive is virtually obsolete and foreign learners can ignore it. Its limited surviving uses are discussed at 20.9. It is formed the same way as the imperfect subjunctive in *-ra* except that last *a* becomes *e*. *-ar* verbs: *-are*, *-ares*, *-are*, *-áremos*, *-areis*, *-aren*. *-er* and *-ir* verbs: *-iere*, *-ieres*, *-iere*, *-iéremos*, *-iereis*, *-ieren*. The future subjunctive of the verbs shown at 16.7.6 note 2 has the endings *-ere*, *-eres*, *-ere*, *-éremos*, *-ereis*, *-eren*.

16.7.8 Forms of the imperative

See 16.3 for the regular forms, and Chapter 21 for irregular forms and the use of the imperative.

(1) The *vos* forms used in Argentina and most other areas of *voseo* can be found by removing the *-d* of the European *vosotros* imperative: *contad* > *contá*, *decid* > *decí*, etc. The *vos* imperative of *ir* 'to go' is *andá*.

16.7.9 Forms of the past participle

The forms and uses of the past participle are discussed in Chapter 23.

16.7.10 Forms of the compound tenses

The forms of the compound tenses, e.g. *he hablado* 'I have spoken', *has visto* 'you've seen', *habían tenido* 'they'd had', *habrán hecho* 'they'll have made', etc., are always predictable if one can conjugate *haber* (see 16.11.22) and one knows the past participle of the verb. For this reason, individual compound tenses are not listed, but the full compound tense forms of a typical verb are shown at 16.13.

The uses of the compound tenses are discussed at 18.2–6.

(1) Important: unlike French, Italian and German, modern Spanish does not form the compound tenses of any verbs with 'to be'. Compare French *je suis venu*(*e*), Italian *sono venuto*(*a*), German *ich bin gekommen* and Spanish *he venido*.

16.7.11 Forms of the gerund (see 24.2)

16.7.12 Forms of the adjectival participle

This refers to forms like *preocupante* 'worrying', *convincente* 'convincing', discussed at 23.6.

16.7.13 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. They are all formed from the appropriate tense of *estar* (see 16.11.21) and the invariable gerund. Their use is discussed in Chapter 19.

16.7.14 Forms of the passive

The passive with *ser*, e.g. *fueron vistos* 'they were seen', *ha sido reconocida* 'she has been recognized', etc., is formed with the appropriate tense of the verb *ser* (16.11.45) and the past participle, which agrees in number and gender with the subject of *ser*.

There is another passive form, called *pasiva refleja*: *se publicó en 2019* 'it was published in 2019'. Both forms are discussed in Chapter 32.

16.8 Regional variations affecting verbs

16.8.1 Colloquial variants

The Spanish verb system is remarkably stable throughout the Hispanic world despite the large number of forms and exceptions. Popular regularizations of irregular forms, e.g. **cabo* for *quepo* (from *caber* 'to fit into'), **produció* for *produjo* (from *producir* 'to produce'), **andé* for *anduve* (from *andar* 'to walk') are stigmatized.

Four colloquial or popular forms are worth noting:

(**a**) Use of *vos* instead of the pronoun *tú* in many parts of Latin America, especially in Argentina. It is discussed in 12.3.1;

(**b**) use of the infinitive for the *vosotros* form of the imperative (used in Spain only): *dar* for *dad* 'give', *callaros* for *callaos* 'shut up!'/'be quiet', *iros* for *idos* 'go away', etc. For discussion see 21.9a;

(**c**) addition of *-s* to the second-person preterite singular, e.g. ?*distes* for *diste* 'you gave', ?*hablastes* for *hablaste* 'you spoke'. This is common in popular speech on both continents, but it is stigmatized and avoided in careful speech;

(**d**) pluralization of forms *haber* (other than *hay*) when it means 'there is'/'there are', e.g. ?*habían muchos* for *había muchos* 'there were many'. This is more or less accepted in speech in Latin America but it is avoided in formal writing and is rejected in Spain. See 34.2.1;

(**e**) a tendency in some popular Latin-American dialects to make radical-changing verbs regular, e.g. **cuentamos* for *contamos* 'we tell', **detiénete* for *detente* 'stop'. Such forms sometimes appear in the dialogue of novels, but they are strongly stigmatized;

(f) use of a special *tú* form of the present indicative in popular Chilean speech (never in formal styles or careful speech), e.g. *estay* for *estás*, *soy* for *eres*.

16.9 Verbs and the written accent

This section deals with the rules for writing the acute accent on verbs.

16.9.1 Spelling and pronunciation of *aislar*, *reunir*, *prohibir*, *rehuir* 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* pronounced *y* or *w*), this diphthong may or may not be broken into two syllables when it is stressed, e.g.

Pronunciation

(See the Preface for the phonetic symbols)

prohibir to prohibit	[proy-ßíɾ] (two syllables)
prohíbe (s)he prohibits	[pro-í-ße] (three syllables)
reunir to join together	[rrew-níɾ] (two syllables)
reúnen they join	[rre-ú-nen] (three syllables)
rehuir to flee from	[rre-wíɾ] (two syllables)
rehúye s(h)e flees from	[rre-ú-ye] (three syllables

Compare the following verb in which the diphthong is not broken:

causar to cause	[kaw-sáɾ] (two syllables)
causa it causes	[káw-sa] (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. *Aislar* 'to isolate', *reunir* 'to bring together', and *prohibir* `to prohibit' are common examples. The ruling affects the following forms of the verb (bracketed forms are not affected):

Tú imperative:	*aísla*	*reúne*	*prohíbe*
Usted(es) imperative:	*aísle/aíslen*	*reúna/reúnan*	*prohíba/prohíban*

Present indicative *aíslo*, *aíslas*, *aísla* (*aislamos*), (*aisláis*), *aíslan*
reúne, *reúnes*, *reúne* (*reunimos*), (*reunís*), *reúnen*
prohíbe, *prohíbes*, *prohíbe* (*prohibimos*), (*prohibís*), *prohíben*

Present subjunctive: *aísle*, *aísles*, *aísle*, (*aislemos*), (*aisléis*), *aíslen*
reúna, *reúnas*, *reúna*, (*reunamos*), (*reunáis*), *reúnan*
prohibir: *prohíba*, *prohíbas*, *prohíba*, (*prohibamos*), (*prohibáis*), *prohíban*

The following verbs are similarly affected, but bracketed verbs are now archaic or rare:

(*ahijar* to adopt)
(*ahilar* to line up)
(*ahincar* to urge)
(*ahitar* to cloy)
ahumar to smoke (food)
(*airar* to anger)
(*amohinar* to vex)
arcaizar to archaize
aullar to howl
aunar to unite
aupar to help up
cohibir to restrain
(*desahitarse* to digest)
enraizar to take root
europeizar to Europeanize
hebraizar to Hebraicize
judaizar to Judaize
maullar to meow
prohijar to adopt
rehilar to quiver
rehusar to refuse
sobrehilar to over-cast (in sewing)

(1) This Academy's spelling rule is now generally obeyed everywhere in print, but many people still omit the accent in handwriting.

(2) In other verbs, the diphthong is not broken. When the diphthong is stressed, the accent falls on its first vowel so no written accent is needed, e.g. *arraigarse* 'to take root' > *arr**a**igo*, *encausar* 'to sue' > *enc**a**usa*, etc. Similar are *amainar* 'to die down', *causar* 'to cause', *desahuciar* 'to evict'/'to give up hope for' (variable, usually the diphthong is retained), *desenvainar* 'to unsheathe', *embaucar* 'to swindle', *embaular* 'to pack' (a trunk/suitcase: variable), *envainar* 'to sheathe', *peinar* 'to comb'/'to do someone's hair', *reinar* 'to reign', etc.

16.9.2 Verbs whose infinitive ends in *-iar*

There are two types. The majority conjugate like *cambiar* 'to change': the *-ia* survives as a diphthong throughout and is always pronounced [ya], so the verb is conjugated like a regular *-ar* verb and no accent is written on the *i*.

But about 50 verbs conjugate like *enviar* 'to send'. These are conjugated like *cambiar* – i.e. regularly – except that the *i* of the diphthong is stressed and written with an accent in the following cases (bracketed forms are not affected):

- Imperative: (*tú*) *envía*, (*usted*) *envíe*, (*vosotros enviad*), (*ustedes*) *envíen*
- Present indicative: *envío*, *envías*, *envía*, (*enviamos*), (*enviáis*), *envían*
- Present subjunctive: *envíe*, *envíes*, *envíe*, (*enviemos*), (*enviéis*), *envíen*

The following list shows common verbs which conjugate like *enviar*:

agriar to sour (but often like *cambiar*)
aliar to ally
amnistiar to amnesty
ampliar to expand/enlarge
ansiar to yearn for
arriar to flood/to haul down
ataviar to array (with clothes)
autografiar to autograph
auxiliar to aid (usually like *cambiar*)
averiar to damage
aviar to fit out
biografiar to write the biography of
conciliar to reconcile (usually like *cambiar*)
contrariar to counter
*criar** to breed/raise
desafiar to challenge
descarriar to misdirect
desliar to untie
desvariar to rave
desviar to divert
enfriar to chill
enviar to send
espiar to spy
expatriarse to emigrate (also like *cambiar*)
expiar to expiate
extasiar to make ecstatic (usually like *cambiar*)
extraviar to mislead
*fiar** to confide
fotografiar to photograph
gloriar(*se*) to glory
*guiar** to guide
hastiar to weary
historiar to chronicle (also like *cambiar*)
inventariar to inventory
*liar** to tie/bundle
mecanografiar to type
paliar to palliate (often like *cambiar*)
*piar** to cheep (like a bird)
porfiar to insist
radiografiar to X-ray
reconciliar to reconcile usually like *cambiar*)
repatriar to repatriate (also like *cambiar*)
resfriar to cool
rociar to sprinkle
telegrafiar to telegraph
vaciar to empty
vanagloriarse to be boastful (almost always like *cambiar*)
variar to vary
vidriar to glaze (also like *cambiar*)

* The Academy has new rules about the spelling of some forms of the verbs marked with an asterisk. See 44.2.4.

16.9.3 Verbs whose infinitive ends in *-uar*

Nearly all conjugate like *actuar* 'to act', i.e. the *u* may be stressed and is then written with an accent. The only forms affected are (bracketed and unlisted forms are not affected):

- Imperative: (*tú*) *actúa*, (*usted*) *actúe*, (*ustedes*) *actúen*
- Present indicative: *actúo*, *actúas*, *actúa*, (*actuamos*) (*actuáis*) *actúan*
- Present subjunctive: *actúe*, *actúes*, *actúe*, (*actuemos*), (*actuéis*), *actúen*

Verbs that conjugate like *actuar*:

acentuar to emphasize
atenuar to attenuate
conceptuar to deem
continuar to continue
desvirtuar to spoil
devaluar to devalue

efectuar to carry out
evaluar to assess
exceptuar to except
extenuar to emaciate
fluctuar to fluctuate
graduar to grade
habituar to habituate
individuar to individualize
infatuar to infatuate
insinuar to hint
perpetuar to perpetuate
preceptuar to establish as a norm/precept
puntuar to punctuate/to assess
redituar yield (profit, etc.)
situar to situate
valuar to value

(1) For verbs whose infinitive ends in *-guar* see 16.4.4.

(2) Verbs ending in *-cuar*, e.g. *evacuar* 'to evacuate' and *adecuar* 'to adapt (a policy/to a situation, etc.)' were traditionally conjugated regularly, i.e. like *averiguar* but without the dieresis; this is the solution preferred by *El País*. But conjugation like *actuar* is now so common that the Academy accepts it (*NGLE* 4.9i).

16.9.4 Verbs ending in *-ear*

All are regular. The combination *ee* is never written with an accent except in the *vosotros* endings of the present subjunctive and in first-person singular preterite, e.g. *paseé*. *Pasear* 'to go for a walk' is conjugated thus:

- Present indicative: *paseo*, *paseas*, *pasea*, *paseamos*, *paseáis*, *pasean*
- Present subjunctive: *pasee*, *pasees*, *pasee*, *paseemos*, *paseéis*, *paseen*
- Preterite: *paseé*, *paseaste*, *paseó*, *paseamos*, *paseasteis*, *pasearon*

16.10 Other verbs with slight irregularities

16.10.1 Verbs ending in *-cer*

If the infinitive ends in *-cer* the spelling change *c* > *z* before *a* or *o* is applied in the case of a few verbs. 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:

coercer to coerce
convencer to convince
destorcer to untwist
ejercer to practise
(*re*)*torcer* to twist (radical changing: see 16.11.12)
vencer to defeat

(**b**) the following exceptional verbs:

- (*re*)*cocer* to boil (food) (radical-changing; see 16.11.12)
- *escocer* to sting (intransitive), conjugated like *cocer*; *picar* 'to sting' is more usual
- *mecer* to rock/swing; *mecerse* to sway

The rest are like *parecer*, i.e. *-zc-* appears before *-o* or *-a*. See 16.11.10. For *hacer*, *placer*, *yacer* see the list of verbs at 16.12.

16.10.2 Verbs ending in *-cir*

The spelling change *c* > *z* before *a* or *o* applies in the case of the regular verbs *esparcir* 'to scatter/strew', *fruncir* 'to pucker/wrinkle' (the eyebrows), *resarcir* 'to repay (effort)', *uncir* 'to yoke' and *zurcir* 'to darn'/'to sew together'. Any others, e.g. *producir*, *lucir*, should be viewed with suspicion, and checked in the list at 16.12.

16.11 Model irregular and radical-changing verbs

16.11.1 Forms: general

Irregular verbs and model radical-changing verbs are listed in alphabetical order. The list omits oddities like the archaic *abarse*, found only in the form *ábate* 'get thee hence!', or *usucapir* 'to acquire property rights through customary use', used in legal jargon and only in the infinitive. In general, only the irregular forms are shown, except in the cases of some very common verbs.

16.11.2 *Abolir* 'to abolish'

Traditionally considered a 'defective verb': only those forms are used in which the verb ending begins with *-i*:

Infinitive: *abolir* Gerund: *aboliendo* Past participle: *abolido*
Imperative: *abolid* (**abole* is not used)
Present indicative: only *abolimos* and *abolís* are used
Present subjunctive: not used

However, the *NGLE* 4.14d and *El País* now accept all forms of this verb, conjugated regularly (i.e. *abole* not **abuele*), although those shown above are more frequently used.

All other tenses are regular. Other verbs or constructions can replace little-used forms, e.g. *sin que se abola* by *sin que sea abolido*. A few other verbs are defective, but only *abolir, agredir* and *transgredir* (see 16.11.4) are common nowadays:

agredir see 16.11.4
arrecirse (Lat. Am.) 'to be frozen stiff'
aterirse 'to be numb with cold' (only infinitive and participle in current use)
blandir 'to brandish'
empedernir 'to harden'/'to petrify' (only the participle, *empedernido*, is in current use)
garantir 'guarantee' (*garantizar* in Spain, but still used in Peru and the Southern Cone, where it is often conjugated regularly)

16.11.3 *Adquirir* 'to acquire' (also *inquirir* 'to enquire')

The infinitive was once *adqu**e**rir*, hence the *-ie-* when the stem vowel is stressed. Bracketed forms are regular, as are all forms not shown, e.g. *adquirí*, *adquiría*, *adquiriré*, *adquiriera*, etc.

- Imperative: (*tú*) *adqu**ie**re*, (*usted*) *adqu**ie**ra*, (*vosotros adquirid*), (*ustedes*) *adqu**ie**ran*
- Present indicative: *adqu**ie**ro*, *adqu**ie**res*, *adqu**ie**re*, (*adquirimos*), (*adquirís*), *adqu**ie**ren*
- Present subjunctive: *adqu**ie**ra*, *adqu**ie**ras*, *adqu**ie**ra*, (*adquiramos*), (*adquiráis*), *adqu**ie**ran*

16.11.4 *Agredir* 'to assault'/'to attack'

Classified by some as defective (like *abolir*; see 16.11.2), by others as a regular *-ir* verb. The new Academy dictionary declares it to be a normal *-ir* verb, and *El País* agrees. *Transgredir* 'to transgress' is also now considered to be regular.

16.11.5 *Andar* 'to walk'/'to go about'

A regular *-ar* verb except for the preterite and the past subjunctives:

Preterite: *and**uv**e*, *and**uv**iste*, *and**uv**o*, *and**uv**imos*, *and**uv**isteis*, *and**uv**ieron*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *anduviera*, *anduvieras*, *anduviera*, *anduviéramos*, *anduvierais*, *anduvieran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *anduviese*, *anduvieses*, *anduviese*, *anduviésemos*, *anduvieseis*, *anduviesen*

Preterite forms like **andé*, **andaste* are heard, but they are strongly stigmatized.

16.11.6 *Asir* 'to grasp'/'to seize'

This verb is dying out and *agarrarse* is now much more common. Forms that contain a *g* are avoided, but other forms are heard, e.g. *me así a una rama para no caerme* 'I clutched hold of a branch so as not to fall'. It is conjugated like a regular *-ir* verb except for (bracketed forms are regular):

Imperative: (*usted*) *asga*, (*vosotros*) *asid*, (*ustedes*) *asgan*
Present indicative: *asgo*, (*ases*, *ase*, *asimos*, *asís*, *asen*)
Present subjunctive: *asga*, *asgas*, *asga*, *asgamos*, *asgáis*, *asgan*

16.11.7 *Balbucir* 'to stammer'

Nowadays found only in those forms whose ending begins with *i*, e.g. *balbucía*, *balbució*. For other forms the regular *balbucear* is used and is the usual verb in spontaneous speech.

16.11.8 *Caber* 'to fit in'

Numerous irregularities:

Gerund: *cabiendo* Past participle: *cabido*
Imperative: (*tú*) *cabe*, (*vosotros*) *cabed*, (*usted*) *quepa*, (*ustedes*) *quepan*
Present indicative: ***quepo***, *cabes*, *cabe*, *cabemos*, *cabéis*, *caben*
Imperfect (regular): *cabía*, *cabías*, *cabía*, *cabíamos*, *cabíais*, *cabían*
Preterite: *c**up**e*, *c**up**iste*, *c**up**o*, *c**up**imos*, *c**up**isteis*, *c**up**ieron*
Future: *ca**br**é*, *ca**br**ás*, *ca**br**á*, *ca**br**emos*, *ca**br**éis*, *ca**br**án* Conditional: *ca**br**ía*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *qu**ep**a*, *qu**ep**as*, *qu**ep**a*, *qu**ep**amos*, *qu**ep**áis*, *qu**ep**an*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *cupiera*, *cupieras*, *cupiera*, *cupiéramos*, *cupierais*, *cupieran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *cupiese*, *cupieses*, *cupiese*, *cupiésemos*, *cupieseis*, *cupiesen*

(1) Usage: *¿quepo yo?* 'is there room for me?', *no cabe* 'it won't fit', *no cabíamos* 'there wasn't room for us', *no cupo en el clóset la ropa de las dos* (ES, Mex. In Spain *clóset = el armario*) 'there was no room in the closet/cupboard for the two women's clothes', *no cabe la menor duda de que* . . . 'there isn't room for the slightest doubt that . . .'.

16.11.9 *Caer* 'to fall'

Gerund: *cayendo* Past participle: *caído*
Imperative: (*tú*) *cae*, (*vosotros*) *caed*, (*usted*) *caiga*, (*ustedes*) *caigan*
Present indicative: *caig**o**, caes*, *cae*, *caemos*, *caéis*, *caen*
Imperfect (regular): *caía*, *caías*, *caía*, *caíamos*, *caíais*, *caían*

Preterite: *caí*, *caíste*, *cayó*, *caímos*, *caísteis*, *cayeron*
Future (regular): *caeré*, etc. Conditional (regular): *caería*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *caiga*, *caigas*, *caiga*, *caigamos*, *caigáis*, *caigan*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *cayera*, *cayeras*, *cayera*, *cayéramos*, *cayerais*, *cayeran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *cayese*, *cayeses*, *cayese*, *cayésemos*, *cayeseis*, *cayesen*

16.11.10 Verbs ending in *-cer*

All verbs ending in *-cer* conjugate like *agradecer* 'to thank', shown below, except the regular verbs *coercer*, *ejercer*, (*con*)*vencer* and *mecer* and the radical-changing verbs *escocer*, (*re*)*cocer* and (*re*)*torcer*. These are discussed at 16.10.1. In all other verbs ending in *-cer*, *c* > *zc* before *a* or *o*. All forms are as for a regular *-er* verb except for (bracketed forms are regular)

Imperative: (*usted*) *agrade**zc**a*, (*vosotros agradeced*), (*ustedes*) *agrade**zc**an*
Present indicative: *agradez**c**o*, (*agradeces*, *agradece*, *agradecemos*, *agradecéis*, *agradecen*)
Present subjunctive: *agradez**c**a*, *agradez**c**as*, *agradez**c**a*, *agradez**c**amos*, *agradez**c**áis*, *agradez**c**an*

16.11.11 *Cerrar* 'to shut'/'to 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. All forms are as for a regular *-ar* verb, save (bracketed forms are regular):

Imperative: (*tú*) *cierra*, (*usted*) *cierre*, (*vosotros cerrad*), (*ustedes*) *cierren*
Present indicative: *cierro*, *cierras*, *cierra*, (*cerramos*), (*cerráis*), *cierran*
Present subjunctive: *cierre*, *cierres*, *cierre*, (*cerremos*), (*cerréis*), *cierren*

16.11.12 *Cocer* 'to boil' (food)

This, and three verbs like it, *torcer* 'to twist', *destorcer* 'to untwist' and *retorcer* 'to wring'/'to twist', conjugate exactly like *mover* save for the predictable spelling change *c* > *z* before *a*, *o* (bracketed forms are regular):

Imperative: (*tú*) *cuece*, (*usted*) *cueza*, (*vosotros coced*), (*ustedes*) *cuezan*
Present indicative: *cuezo*, *cueces*, *cuece*, (*cocemos*), (*cocéis*), *cuecen*
Present subjunctive: *cueza*, *cuezas*, *cueza*, (*cozamos*), (*cozáis*), *cuezan*

16.11.13 *Construir* 'to build'

Verbs ending in *-uir* are quite common. An unstressed *i* between vowels is spelt *y*, e.g. *construyó* for the expected **construió* and an unexpected *y* is inserted in a number of forms, e.g. *construyes* for the predicted **construes*.

Gerund: *construyendo* Past participle: *construido* (no accent! See 44.2.3 for explanation)
Imperative: (*tú*) *construye*, (*vosotros*) *construid*, (*usted*) *construya*, (*ustedes*) *construyan*
Present indicative: *construyo*, *construyes*, *construye*, *construimos* (no accent!), *construís*, *construyen*
Imperfect (regular): *construía*, *construías*, *construía*, *construíamos*, *construíais*, *construían*
Preterite: *construí*, *construiste*, *construyó*, *construimos*, *construisteis*, *construyeron*
Future (regular): *construiré*, etc. Conditional (regular): *construiría*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *construya*, *construyas*, *construya*, *construyamos*, *construyáis*, *construyan*

Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *construyera*, *construyeras*, *construyera*, *construyéramos*, *construyerais*, *construyeran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *construyese*, *construyeses*, *construyese*, *construyésemos*, *construyeseis*, *construyesen*

(1) *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*, *argüía*, but *arguya*, *arguyeron*, etc.

(2) *Huir* 'to flee' (but not *rehuir* 'to avoid/shun') and *fluir* 'to flow' are affected by the Academy's new spelling recommendations. See 44.2.4.

16.11.14 *Contar* 'to count'/'to tell a story'

A common type of radical-changing verb: the *o* of the stem changes to *ue* when it is stressed. All forms are as for a regular *-ar* verb except (bracketed forms are regular):

Imperative: (*tú*) *cuenta*, (*usted*) *cuente*, (*vosotros contad*), (*ustedes*), *cuenten*
Present indicative: *cuento*, *cuentas*, *cuenta*, (*contamos*), (*contáis*), *cuentan*
Present subjunctive: *cuente*, *cuentes*, *cuente*, (*contemos*), (*contéis*), *cuenten*

16.11.15 *Dar* 'to give'

Gerund: *dando* Past participle: *dado*
Imperative: (*tú*) *da*, (*vosotros*) *dad*, (*usted*) ***dé***, (*ustedes*) *den*
Present indicative: *doy*, *das* (also used with *vos*), *da*, *damos*, *dais*, *dan*
Imperfect (regular): *daba*, *dabas*, *daba*, *dábamos*, *dabais*, *daban*
Preterite: *d**i*** (no accent!), *d**i**ste*, *d**io*** (no accent!), *d**i**mos*, *d**i**steis*, *d**ie**ron*
Future (regular): *daré*, etc. Conditional (regular): *daría*, etc.
Present subjunctive: ***dé***, *des*, *dé*, *demos*, *deis*, *den*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *diera*, *dieras*, *diera*, *diéramos*, *dierais*, *dieran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *diese*, *dieses*, *diese*, *diésemos*, *dieseis*, *diesen*

(1) The accent on the present subjunctive forms distinguishes them from the preposition *de* 'of'. This accent becomes unnecessary - although it is seen in print and often in handwriting – when a pronoun is added: *deme* 'give me', *dele* 'give him/her', *denos* 'give us'.

16.11.16 *Decir* 'to say'

Gerund: *diciendo* Past participle: ***dicho***
Imperative: (*tú*) ***di***, (*vosotros*) *decid*, (*usted*) *di**g**a*, (*ustedes*) *di**g**an*
Present indicative: *di**g**o*, *dices*, *dice*, *decimos*, *decís*, *dicen*
Imperfect (regular): *decía*, *decías*, *decía*, *decíamos*, *decíais*, *decían*
Preterite: *di**j**e*, *di**j**iste*, *di**j**o*, *di**j**imos*, *di**j**isteis*, *di**j**eron*
Future: *di**r**é*, *di**r**ás*, *di**r**á*, *di**r**emos*, *di**r**éis*, *di**r**án* Conditional: *di**r**ía*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *diga*, *digas*, *diga*, *digamos*, *digáis*, *digan*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *dijera*, *dijeras*, *dijera*, *dijéramos*, *dijerais*, *dijeran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *dijese*, *dijeses*, *dijese*, *dijésemos*, *dijeseis*, *dijesen*

(1) *Predecir* 'to foretell' and *contradecir* 'to contradict' are conjugated regularly in the future, conditional and *tú* imperative forms: *prediceré*, etc., *predeciría*, etc., *tú* imperative *predice*, etc. Forms like *prediré*, *contradiría* are said by Seco (1998), 351, to be 'rare' but the Academy (*NGLE* 4.11a) accepts them.

(2) *Desdecir* (e.g. *desdecirse de* 'to go back on') has the *tú* imperative *desdice*, but is otherwise regular, although rarer forms like *desdeciré*, *desdeciría* are not considered incorrect. The same is true of *contradecir* 'to contradict': *contradice*, *contradiré*, *contradiría*, rarely *contradeciré*, *contradeciría*.

16.11.17 *Discernir*, 'to discern'

This shows the common radical-changing modification *e* > *ie*, but verbs like *discernir* are very unusual in the *-ir* conjugation: only *cernirse* 'to hover'/'to loom', *concernir* (third-person only) 'to concern' and *hendir* (in Spain also *hender*, like *entender*) 'to cleave' are conjugated like it. Bracketed forms are regular:

Imperative: (*tú*) *disc**ie**rne*, (*usted*) *disc**ie**rna*, (*vosotros discernid*), (*ustedes*) *disc**ie**rnan*
Present indicative: *disc**ie**rno*, *disc**ie**rnes*, *disc**ie**rne*, (*discernimos*), (*discernís*), *disc**ie**rnen*
Preterite (regular): *discerní*, *discerniste*, *discernió**, *discernimos*, *discernisteis*, *discernieron**
Present subjunctive: *disc**ie**rna*, *disc**ie**rnas*, *disc**ie**rna*, (*discernamos*), (*discernáis*), *disc**ie**rnan*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*) (regular): *discerniera*, etc.
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*) (regular): *discerniese*, etc.

*Not the expected **discirnió*, **discirnieron*

All other forms are as for a regular *-ir* verb.

16.11.18 *Dormir* 'to sleep', *morir* 'to die'

Dormir and *morir* are the only verbs of this kind. Apart from the common change *o* > *ue* when the *o* is stressed, the third-person preterite stem vowel is *u*. The *u* also appears in the first and second-person plural of the present subjunctive and in the gerund. Forms in brackets are regular:

Gerund: *d**u**rmiendo* Past participle: *dormido*, but *muerto* is the past participle of *morir*
Imperative: (*tú*) *d**ue**rme*, (*vosotros dormid*), (*usted*) *duerma*, (*ustedes*) *duerman*
Present indicative: *d**ue**rmo*, *d**ue**rmes*, *d**ue**rme*, (*dormimos*), (*dormís*), *d**ue**rmen*
Imperfect (regular): *dormía*, *dormías*, *dormía*, *dormíamos*, *dormíais*, *dormían*
Preterite: (*dormí*), (*dormiste*), *d**u**rmió*, (*dormimos*), (*dormisteis*), *d**u**rmieron*
Future (regular): *dormiré*, etc. Conditional (regular): *dormiría*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *d**ue**rma*, *d**ue**rmas*, *d**ue**rma*, *d**u**rmamos*, *d**u**rmáis*, *d**ue**rman*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *d**u**rmiera*, *d**u**rmieras*, *d**u**rmiera*, *d**u**rmiéramos*, *d**u**rmierais*, *d**u**rmieran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *d**u**rmiese*, *d**u**rmieses*, *d**u**rmiese*, *d**u**rmiésemos*, *d**u**rmieseis*, *d**u**rmiesen*

(1) In literary and journalistic styles the participle *muerto* is sometimes used instead of *matado* 'killed' when human beings are involved: *un total de tres soldados fueron muertos por un dispositivo explosivo* 'a total of three soldiers were killed by an explosive device'.

16.11.19 *Erguir*(*se*) 'to rear up'/'to sit up straight'

This verb has alternative forms in some of its tenses, the forms with *y-* being preferred nowadays. Forms in brackets are regular:

Gerund: *irguiendo* Past participle: *erguido*
Imperative: (*tú*) *yergue*/*irgue*, (*vosotros erguid*), (*usted*) *yerga*/*irga*, (*ustedes*) *yergan*/*irgan*
Present indicative: *yergo*/*irgo*, *yergues*/*irgues*, *yergue*/*irgue*, (*erguimos*), (*erguís*), *yerguen*/*irguen*
Imperfect (regular): *erguía*, *erguías*, *erguía*, etc.

Preterite: (*erguí*), (*erguiste*), ***i**rguió*, (*erguimos*), (*erguisteis*), ***i**rguieron*
Present subjunctive: *yerga/irga*, *yergas/irgas*, *yerga/irga*, *yergamos/irgamos*, *yergáis/irgáis*, *yergan/irgan*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *irguiera*, *irguieras*, *irguiera*, *irguiéramos*, *irguierais*, *irguieran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *irguiese*, *irguieses*, *irguiese*, *irguiésemos*, *irguieseis*, *irguiesen*

(1) All other forms are regular. Usage: *no te agaches—ponte erguido* 'stop slouching – sit up straight', *se irguió como una serpiente* 'it rose/reared up like a snake', *el perro irguió las orejas* 'the dog pricked up its ears', *él se irguió un momento, recostándose sobre la almohada* (JV, Mex.) 'he sat up for a moment, leaning back against the pillow'.

16.11.20 *Errar* 'to wander'/'err'

This verb conjugates like *cerrar*, i.e. *e* > *ie* when stressed, but the *ie* is written *ye*. It is, however, regular in the Southern Cone and Colombia and in some other parts of Latin America, i.e. *erro*, *erras*, *erra*, etc. Conjugated like a regular *ar* verb except for (bracketed forms are regular):

Imperative: (*tú*) ***y**erra*, (*usted*) ***y**erre*, (*vosotros errad*), (*ustedes*) ***y**erren*
Present indicative: ***y**erro*, ***y**erras*, ***y**erra*, (*erramos*), (*erráis*), ***y**erran*
Present subjunctive: ***y**erre*, ***y**erres*, ***y**erre*, (*erremos*), (*erréis*), ***y**erren*

16.11.21 *Estar* 'to be'

This verb is used very frequently. The difference between it and *ser*, which both mean 'to be', is discussed in Chapter 33.

Gerund (reg.): *estando* Past participle (reg.): *estado*
Imperative: (*tú*) *está*, (*vosotros estad*, reg.), (*usted*) *esté*, (*ustedes*) *estén*
Present indicative: ***estoy***, *estás*, *está*, *estamos*, *estáis*, *están*
Imperfect (regular): *estaba*, *estabas*, *estaba*, *estábamos*, *estabais*, *estaban*
Preterite: *est**uv**e*, *est**uv**iste*, *est**uv**o*, *est**uv**imos*, *est**uv**isteis*, *est**uv**ieron*
Future (reg.): *estaré*, etc. Conditional (reg.): *estaría*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *esté*, *estés*, *esté*, *estemos*, *estéis*, *estén*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *estuviera*, *estuvieras*, *estuviera*, *estuviéramos*, *estuvierais*, *estuvieran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *estuviese*, *estuvieses*, *estuviese*, *estuviésemos*, *estuvieseis*, *estuviesen*

(1) The imperative is often formed from the pronominal (i.e. 'reflexive') form, i.e. *estate*, *estaos*, *estese*, *estense.* These are frequently – but unnecessarily – spelt with an accent, e.g. *estáte.* See 21.2.6.

16.11.22 *Haber*, auxiliary verb, and also 'there is', 'there are', 'there were', etc.

This common verb is used to form the compound tenses of all regular and irregular verbs (for a discussion of the compound tenses, e.g. *he hablado*, *habían visto*, see Chapter 18). It is also used in the third person only as the main 'existential' verb, cf. *había muchos* 'there were a lot', *habrá menos de cinco* 'there will be less than five'. When used thus its present indicative form is *hay*: see Chapter 34 for a discussion of its use.

Gerund: *habiendo* Past participle: *habido*
Imperative: (not used)
Present indicative: *he*, *has* (also used with *vos*), *ha* (*hay*), *hemos*, *habéis*, *han*
Imperfect (regular): *había*, *habías*, *había*, *habíamos*, *habíais*, *habían*

Preterite: *hube*, *hubiste*, *hubo*, *hubimos*, *hubisteis*, *hubieron*
Future: *habré*, *habrás*, *habrá*, *habremos*, *habréis*, *habrán*
Conditional: *habría*, *habrías*, *habría*, *habríamos*, *habríais*, *habrían*
Present subjunctive: *haya*, *hayas*, *haya*, *hayamos*, *hayáis*, *hayan*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *hubiera*, *hubieras*, *hubiera*, *hubiéramos*, *hubierais*, *hubieran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *hubiese*, *hubieses*, *hubiese*, *hubiésemos*, *hubieseis*, *hubiesen*

(1) The past subjunctive in *-ra* is also much used to form the conditional perfect, i.e. *te hubiera llamado* for *te habría llamado* 'I would have phoned you'. See 17.7.5 for discussion.

(2) When it means 'there is/was/will be', etc., this verb is singular: *había cinco* 'there were five'. Forms like ?*habían cinco* are unacceptable in Castilian-speaking Spain and in writing everywhere, but they are heard in spoken Spanish in Catalonia and Latin America.

(3) *Habemos* is used in the phrase *nos las habemos* 'we're dealing with'. See 8.4.4 note 1 for an example. In other contexts, the form *habemos* is stigmatized. See 34.2.1 note 2.

(4) The form ?*haiga* is sometimes heard for the subjunctive *haya* but it is stigmatized as rustic or illiterate.

16.11.23 *Hacer* 'to do'/'to make'

There are several compounds, e.g. *deshacer* 'to undo', *contrahacer* 'to counterfeit'

Gerund: *haciendo* Past participle: *hecho*
Imperative: (*tú*) *haz*, (*vosotros*) *haced*, (*usted*) *haga*, (*ustedes*) *hagan*
Present indicative: *hago*, *haces*, *hace*, *hacemos*, *hacéis*, *hacen*
Imperfect (regular): *hacía*, *hacías*, *hacía*, *hacíamos*, *hacíais*, *hacían*
Preterite: *hice*, *hiciste*, *hizo*, *hicimos*, *hicisteis*, *hicieron*
Future: *haré*, *harás*, *hará*, *haremos*, *haréis*, *harán* Conditional: *haría*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *haga*, *hagas*, *haga*, *hagamos*, *hagáis*, *hagan*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *hiciera*, *hicieras*, *hiciera*, *hiciéramos*, *hicierais*, *hicieran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *hiciese*, *hicieses*, *hiciese*, *hiciésemos*, *hicieseis*, *hiciesen*

(1) *Satisfacer* 'to satisfy' is conjugated like *hacer* – *satisfará*, *satisfizo*, etc. – although the *tú* imperative can be either *satisfaz* or *satisface*.

(2) The form *ha* for *hace* is obsolete, but occasionally seen in archaic phrases like *años ha* 'years ago' for *hace años*.

16.11.24 *Ir* 'to go'

Numerous irregularities:

Gerund: *yendo* Past participle: *ido*
Imperative: (*tú*) *ve* (see note **2**), (*vosotros*) *id* (see note **1**), (*usted*) *vaya*, (*ustedes*) *vayan*
Present indicative: *voy*, *vas* (also used with *vos*), *va*, *vamos*, *vais*, *van*
Imperfect: *iba*, *ibas*, *iba*, *íbamos*, *ibais*, *iban*
Preterite: ***fui*** (no accent!), *fuiste*, ***fue*** (no accent!), *fuimos*, *fuisteis*, *fueron*
Future (regular): *iré*, *irás*, *irá*, *iremos*, *iréis*, *irán* Conditional (regular): *iría*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *vaya*, *vayas*, *vaya*, *vayamos*, *vayáis*, *vayan*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *fuera*, *fueras*, *fuera*, *fuéramos*, *fuerais*, *fueran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *fuese*, *fueses*, *fuese*, *fuésemos*, *fueseis*, *fuesen*

(1) The *vosotros* imperative of *irse* is irregularly *idos* (for the predicted **íos*). See 21.2.4 for further discussion of this form.

(2) The standard Argentine *vos* imperative of *ir* is *andá*. The predicted *vos* imperative *i* is reportedly heard in popular speech in north-eastern Argentina but it is stigmatized (*NGLE* 4.13j). We have never seen it in written Spanish.

16.11.25 *Jugar* 'to play' (a game).

This verb is unique in that *u*>*ue* when stressed. Note also *g*>*gu* before *e*. All forms are as for a regular *-ar* verb except (bracketed forms are regular):

Imperative: (*tú*) *j**ue**ga*, (*usted*) *j**ue**gue*, (*vosotros jugad*), (*ustedes*) *j**ue**guen*
Present indicative: *j**ue**go*, *j**ue**gas*, *j**ue**ga*, (*jugamos*), (*jugáis*), *j**ue**gan*
Preterite (regular): *jugué*, *jugaste*, *jugó*, *jugamos*, *jugasteis*, *jugaron*
Present subjunctive: *j**ue**gue*, *j**ue**gues*, *j**ue**gue*, (*juguemos*), (*juguéis*), *j**ue**guen*

16.11.26 *Lucir* 'to look good', 'to wear' as in *lucía un vestido nuevo* 'she was wearing a new dress'

C > *zc* before *a* or *o*. All other forms are as for a regular *-ir* verb (bracketed forms are also regular):

Imperative: (*tú luce*), (*usted*) *luzca*, (*vosotros lucid*), (*ustedes*) *luzcan*
Present indicative: *luz**c**o*, (*luces*, *luce*, *lucimos*, *lucís*, *lucen*)
Present subjunctive: *luz**c**a*, *luz**c**as*, *luz**c**a*, *luz**c**amos*, *luz**c**áis*, *luz**c**an*

(1) Verbs ending in *-ducir* are conjugated like *producir*, shown at 16.11.37.

16.11.27 *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:

Gerund: *maldiciendo* Past participle: ***maldecido*** (for *maldito*, *bendito* see 23.2.1)
Imperative: (*tú*) ***maldice***, (*vosotros*) *maldecid*, (*usted*) *maldiga*, (*ustedes*) *maldigan*
Present indicative: *maldigo*, *maldices*, *maldice*, *maldecimos*, *maldecís*, *maldicen*
Imperfect (regular): *maldecía*, etc.
Preterite: *maldije*, *maldijiste*, *maldijo*, *maldijimos*, *maldijisteis*, *maldijeron*
Future (regular): ***maldeciré***, ***maldecirás***, ***maldecirá***, ***maldeciremos***, ***maldeciréis***, ***maldecirán***
Conditional (regular): ***maldeciría***, ***maldecirías***, ***maldeciría***, ***maldeciríamos***, ***maldeciríais***, ***maldecirían***
Present subjunctive: *maldiga*, *maldigas*, *maldiga*, *maldigamos*, *maldigáis*, *maldigan*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *maldijera*, *maldijeras*, *maldijera*, *maldijéramos*, *maldijerais*, *maldijeran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *maldijese*, *maldijeses*, *maldijese*, *maldijésemos*, *maldijeseis*, *maldijesen*

16.11.28 *Mover* 'to move'

A common type of radical-changing verb. The *o* of the stem changes to *ue* when stressed. All other forms (including bracketed ones) are as for regular *-er* verbs:

Imperative: (*tú*) m**ue**ve, (*usted*) m**ue**va, (*vosotros moved*), (*ustedes*) m**ue**van
Present indicative: m**ue**vo, m**ue**ves, m**ue**ve, (*movemos*), (*movéis*), m**ue**ven
Present subjunctive: m**ue**va, m**ue**vas, m**ue**va, (*movamos*), (*mováis*), m**ue**van

16.11.29 *Oír* 'to hear' (also *desoír* 'to disregard', 'to turn a deaf ear to a request')

Gerund: *oyendo* Past participle: *oído*
Imperative: (*tú*) *oye*, (*vosotros*) *oíd*, (*usted*) *oiga*, (*ustedes*) *oigan*
Present indicative: ***oigo***, *oyes*, *oye*, *oímos*, *oís*, *oyen*
Imperfect (regular): *oía*, *oías*, *oía*, *oíamos*, *oíais*, *oían*
Preterite: *oí*, *oíste*, *oyó*, *oímos*, *oísteis*, *oyeron*
Future (regular): *oiré*, etc. Conditional (regular): *oiría*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *oiga*, *oigas*, *oiga*, *oigamos*, *oigáis*, *oigan*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *oyera*, *oyeras*, *oyera*, *oyéramos*, *oyerais*, *oyeran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *oyese*, *oyeses*, *oyese*, *oyésemos*, *oyeseis*, *oyesen*

(1) There is a confusing and spreading tendency everywhere to replace *oír* by *escuchar*, which properly means 'to listen' and not 'to hear'. One hears answerphone messages like *deja un mensaje cuando escuches la señal* for *cuando oigas la señal* 'leave a message when you hear the tone'.

16.11.30 *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. All forms, including bracketed ones, as for a regular *-er* verb except:

Imperative: (*tú*) ***hue***le, (*usted*) ***hue***la, (*vosotros oled*), (*ustedes*) ***hue***lan
Present indicative: ***hue***lo, ***hue***les, ***hue***le, (*olemos*), (*oléis*), ***hue***len
Present subjunctive: ***hue***la, ***hue***las, ***hue***la, (*olamos*), (*oláis*), ***hue***lan

16.11.31 *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 imperfect subjunctive:

Gerund: p**i**diendo Past participle: *pedido*
Imperative: (*tú*) p**i**de, (*vosotros*) *pedid*, (*usted*) p**i**da, (*ustedes*) p**i**dan
Present indicative: p**i**do, *pides*, p**i**de, *pedimos*, *pedís*, p**i**den
Imperfect (regular): *pedía*, *pedías*, *pedía*, *pedíamos*, *pedíais*, *pedían*
Preterite: p**e**dí, *pediste*, p**i**dió, *pedimos*, *pedisteis*, p**i**dieron
Future (regular): *pediré*, etc. Conditional (regular): *pediría*, etc.
Present subjunctive: p**i**da, p**i**das, p**i**da, p**i**damos, p**i**dáis, p**i**dan
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *pidiera*, *pidieras*, *pidiera*, *pidiéramos*, *pidierais*, *pidieran*
Imperfect subjunctive: (*-se*): *pidiese*, *pidieses*, *pidiese*, *pidiésemos*, *pidieseis*, *pidiesen*

16.11.32 *Perder* 'to lose'

A common type of radical-changing verb. The endings are regular, but the *e* of the stem changes to *ie* when stressed. All forms, included bracketed ones, are as for a regular *-er* verb except:

Imperative: (*tú*) p***ie***rde, (*usted*) p***ie***rda, (*ustedes*) p***ie***rdan
Present indicative: p***ie***rdo, p***ie***rdes, p***ie***rde, (*perdemos*), (*perdéis*), p***ie***rden
Present subjunctive: p***ie***rda, p***ie***rdas, p***ie***rda, (*perdamos*), (*perdáis*), p***ie***rdan

16.11.33 *Placer* 'to please'

Found only in the third person and nowadays rare but not quite extinct: *gustar* (regular) is the usual word for 'to please'. It is conjugated like *agradecer* (see 16.11.10) except that archaic irregular alternatives, none nowadays used, existed for the following third-person forms:

Preterite	Present subjunctive	Imperfect subjunctive
sing. *plugo*, plur. *pluguieron*	*plega*(*n*)	*pluguiera*(*n*)/*pluguiese*(*n*)

16.11.34 *Poder* 'to be able'

Gerund: *pudiendo* Past participle: *podido*
Imperative: not used
Present indicative: *puedo*, *puedes*, *puede*, *podemos*, *podéis*, *pueden*
Imperfect (regular): *podía*, *podías*, *podía*, *podíamos*, *podíais*, *podían*
Preterite: p***u***de, p***u***diste, p***u***do, p***u***dimos, p***u***disteis, p***u***dieron
Future: po***dr***é, po***dr***ás, po***dr***á, po***dr***emos, po***dr***éis, po***dr***án Conditional: po***dr***ía, etc.
Present subjunctive: *pueda*, *puedas*, *pueda*, *podamos*, *podáis*, *puedan*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *pudiera*, *pudieras*, *pudiera*, *pudiéramos*, *pudierais*, *pudieran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *pudiese*, *pudieses*, *pudiese*, *pudiésemos*, *pudieseis*, *pudiesen*

16.11.35 *Poner* 'to put'

Gerund: *poniendo* Past participle: *puesto*
Imperative: (*tú*) ***pon***, (*vosotros*) *poned*, (*usted*) *ponga*, (*ustedes*) *pongan*
Present indicative: ***pongo***, *pones*, *pone*, *ponemos*, *ponéis*, *ponen*
Imperfect (regular): *ponía*, *ponías*, *ponía*, *poníamos*, *poníais*, *ponían*
Preterite: p***us***e, p***us***iste, p***us***o, p***us***imos, p***us***isteis, p***us***ieron
Future: *pondré*, *pondrás*, *pondrá*, *pondremos*, *pondréis*, *pondrán* Conditional: *pondría*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *ponga*, *pongas*, *ponga*, *pongamos*, *pongáis*, *pongan*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *pusiera*, *pusieras*, *pusiera*, *pusiéramos*, *pusierais*, *pusieran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *pusiese*, *pusieses*, *pusiese*, *pusiésemos*, *pusieseis*, *pusiesen*

(1) Also compounds like *componer* 'to compose', *imponer* 'to impose', *proponer* 'to propose', *descomponer* 'to split something up', *suponer* 'to suppose', etc. An accent is written on the *tú* imperative of these compounds, e.g. *componer* 'to compose' > *compón*, *posponer* 'to postpone' > *pospón*.

16.11.36 *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*. This is a spelling rule, not an irregularity:

Gerund: *pose**y**endo* Past participle: *poseído*
Imperative: (*tú*) *posee*, (*vosotros*) *poseed*, (*usted*) *posea*, (*ustedes*) *posean*
Present indicative: *poseo*, *posees*, *posee*, *poseemos*, *poseéis*, *poseen*
Imperfect (regular): *poseía*, *poseías*, *poseía*, *poseíamos*, *poseíais*, *poseían*

Preterite: *poseí*, *poseíste*, *pose**y**ó*, *poseímos*, *poseísteis*, *pose**y**eron*
Future (regular): *poseeré*, etc. Conditional (regular): *poseería*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *posea*, *poseas*, *posea*, *poseamos*, *poseáis*, *posean*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *poseyera*, *poseyeras*, *poseyera*, *poseyéramos*, *poseyerais*, *poseyeran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *poseyese*, *poseyeses*, *poseyese*, *poseyésemos*, *poseyeseis*, *poseyesen*

16.11.37 ***Producir*** **'to produce'**

Conjugated like *lucir* except for the preterite and for forms based on the preterite stem. The preterite endings, and therefore the past and future subjunctive endings are *-**e**ron*, *-**e**ra*, *-**e**se*, etc., not *-**i**eron*, *-**i**era*, *-**i**ese*.

Imperative: (*tú*) *produce*, (*vosotros*) *producid*, *usted produzca*, *ustedes produzcan*
Present indicative: *produzco*, *produces*, *produce*, *producimos*, *producís*, *producen*
Imperfect (regular): *producía*, etc.
Preterite: *prod**uj**e*, *prod**uj**iste*, *prod**uj**o*, *prod**uj**imos*, *prod**uj**isteis*, *prod**uj**eron*
Future (regular): *produciré*, etc. Conditional (regular): *produciría*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *produzca*, *produzcas*, *produzca*, *produzcamos*, *produzcáis*, *produzcan*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *produjera*, *produjeras*, *produjera*, *produjéramos*, *produjerais*, *produjeran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *produjese*, *produjeses*, *produjese*, *produjésemos*, *produjeseis*, *produjesen*

(1) Preterite forms like **produció*, **conducí* are common mistakes in popular speech, but they are stigmatized.

16.11.38 ***Querer*** **'to want'/'to love'**

Gerund: *queriendo* Past participle: *querido*
Imperative (rarely used): (*tú*) *quiere*, (*vosotros*) *quered*, (*usted*) *quiera*, (*ustedes*) *quieran*
Present indicative: *quiero*, *quieres*, *quiere*, *queremos*, *queréis*, *quieren*
Imperfect (regular): *quería*, *querías*, *quería*, *queríamos*, *queríais*, *querían*
Preterite: *qu**i**se*, *qu**i**siste*, *qu**i**so*, *qu**i**simos*, *qu**i**sisteis*, *qu**i**sieron*
Future: *que**rr**é*, *que**rr**ás*, *que**rr**á*, *que**rr**emos*, *que**rr**éis*, *que**rr**án* Conditional: *que**rr**ía*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *quiera*, *quieras*, *quiera*, *queramos*, *queráis*, *quieran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *quisiera*, *quisieras*, *quisiera*, *quisiéramos*, *quisierais*, *quisieran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *quisiese*, *quisieses*, *quisiese*, *quisiésemos*, *quisieseis*, *quisiesen*

16.11.39 ***Reír*** **'to laugh'**

This verb is in fact conjugated in almost the same way as *pedir*, although the absence of a consonant between the vowels obscures the similarity:

Gerund: *riendo* Past participle: *reído*
Imperative: (*tú*) *r**í**e*, (*vosotros*) *reíd*, (*usted*) *ría*, (*ustedes*) *rían*
Present indicative: *r**í**o*, *r**í**es*, *r**í**e*, *reímos*, *reís*, *r**í**en*
Imperfect (regular): *reía*, *reías*, *reía*, *reíamos*, *reíais*, *reían*
Preterite: *reí*, *reíste*, *r**i**o*,* *reímos*, *reísteis*, *r**i**eron*
Future (regular): *reiré*, *reirás*, *reirá*, *reiremos*, *reiréis*, *reirán* Conditional (regular): *reiría*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *r**í**a*, *r**í**as*, *r**í**a*, *r**i**amos*, *riais**, *r**í**an*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *riera*, *rieras*, *riera*, *riéramos*, *rierais*, *rieran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *riese*, *rieses*, *riese*, *riésemos*, *rieseis*, *riesen*.

*The Academy now recommends that these forms should be written without an accent. See 44.2.4. This applies only to *reír* and *freír* to 'fry'. In other verbs whose infinitive ends in *-eír* the final vowel of the third-person singular preterite is written with an accent, e.g. *sonrió*, *sofrió*, etc.

16.11.40 ***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 16.4.10. Only the forms that differ from *pedir* are shown, and bracketed forms are also regular

Gerund: *riñendo*
Preterite: (*reñí*), (*reñiste*), ***riñó,*** (*reñimos*), (*reñisteis*), ***riñeron***
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *riñera*, *riñeras*, *riñera*, *riñéramos*, *riñerais*, *riñeran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *riñese*, *riñeses*, *riñese*, *riñésemos*, *riñeseis*, *riñesen*

16.11.41 ***Roer* 'to gnaw'**

The bracketed forms are little-used alternatives. In practice the first-person singular indicative is avoided and may be expressed by *estoy royendo* 'I'm gnawing'.

Gerund: *royendo* Past participle: *roído*
Imperative: (*tú*) *roe*, (*vosotros*) *roed*, (*usted*) *roa* (*roiga/roya*), (*ustedes*) *roan* (*roigan/royan*)
Present indicative: *roo* (*roigo/royo*; the Academy prefers *roo*), *roes*, *roe*, *roemos*, *roéis*, *roen*
Imperfect (regular): *roía*, *roías*, *roía*, *roíamos*, *roíais*, *roían*
Preterite: *roí*, *roíste*, *royó*, *roímos*, *roísteis*, *royeron*
Future (regular): *roeré*, etc. Conditional (regular): *roería*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *roa* (*roiga/roya*; the Academy prefers *roa*), *roas* (*roigas/royas*), *roa* (*roiga/roya*), *roamos* (*roigamos/royamos*), *roáis* (*roigáis/royáis*), *roan* (*roigan/royan*)
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *royera*, *royeras*, *royera*, *royéramos*, *royerais*, *royeran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *royese*, *royeses*, *royese*, *royésemos*, *royeseis*, *royesen*

16.11.42 ***Saber* 'to know'**

Gerund: *sabiendo* Past participle: *sabido*
Imperative (rarely used): (*tú*) *sabe*, (*vosotros*) *sabed*, (*usted*) *sepa*, (*ustedes*) *sepan*
Present indicative: ***sé,*** *sabes*, *sabe*, *sabemos*, *sabéis*, *saben*
Imperfect (regular): *sabía*, *sabías*, *sabía*, *sabíamos*, *sabíais*, *sabían*
Preterite: *s**up**e*, *s**up**iste*, *s**up**o*, *s**up**imos*, *s**up**isteis*, *s**up**ieron*
Future: *sa**br**é*, *sa**br**ás*, *sa**br**á*, *sa**br**emos*, *sa**br**éis*, *sa**br**án* Conditional: *sa**br**ía*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *s**ep**a*, *s**ep**as*, *s**ep**a*, *s**ep**amos*, *s**ep**áis*, *s**ep**an*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *supiera*, *supieras*, *supiera*, *supiéramos*, *supierais*, *supieran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *supiese*, *supieses*, *supiese*, *supiésemos*, *supieseis*, *supiesen*

16.11.43 ***Salir* 'to go out'/'to leave'**

Gerund: *saliendo* Past participle: *salido*
Imperative: (*tú*) *sal*, (*vosotros*) *salid*, (*usted*) *salga*, (*ustedes*) *salgan*
Present indicative: *sal**g**o*, *sales*, *sale*, *salimos*, *salís*, *salen*
Imperfect (regular): *salía*, *salías*, *salía*, etc.
Preterite (regular): *salí*, *saliste*, *salió*, etc.
Future: *sal**dr**é*, *sal**dr**ás*, *sal**dr**á*, *sal**dr**emos*, *sal**dr**éis*, *sal**dr**án* Conditional: *sal**dr**ía*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *sal**g**a*, *sal**g**as*, *sal**g**a*, *sal**g**amos*, *sal**g**áis*, *sal**g**an*

Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*) (regular): *saliera*, etc.
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*) (regular): *saliese*, etc.

16.11.44 *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:

Gerund: *s**i**ntiendo* Past participle *sentido*
Imperative: (*tú*) *s**ie**nte*, (*usted*) *s**ie**nta*, (*vosotros sentid*), (*ustedes*) *s**ie**ntan*
Present indicative: *s**ie**nto*, *s**ie**ntes*, *s**ie**nte*, (*sentimos*), (*sentís*), *s**ie**nten*
Preterite: (*sentí*), (*sentiste*), *s**i**ntió*, (*sentimos*), (*sentisteis*), *s**i**ntieron*
Present subjunctive: *s**ie**nta*, *s**ie**ntas*, *s**ie**nta*, *s**i**ntamos*, *s**i**ntáis*, *s**ie**ntan*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *s**i**ntiera*, *s**i**ntieras*, *s**i**ntiera*, *s**i**ntiéramos*, *s**i**ntierais*, *s**i**ntieran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *s**i**ntiese*, *s**i**ntieses*, *s**i**ntiese*, *s**i**ntiésemos*, *s**i**ntieseis*, *s**i**ntiesen*

16.11.45 *Ser* 'to be'

A very common verb with several irregularities. For its relationship with *estar* see Chapter 33. Its preterite and also the past subjunctive forms are the same as those of *ir* 'to go':

Gerund: *siendo* Past participle: *sido*
Imperative: (*tú*) *sé* (see note), (*vosotros*) *sed*, (*usted*) *sea*, (*ustedes*) *sean*
Present indicative: *soy*, *eres* (see note 2) *es*, *somos*, *sois*, *son*
Imperfect: *era*, *eras*, *era*, *éramos*, *erais*, *eran*
Preterite: *fui* (no accent!), *fuiste*, *fue* (no accent!), *fuimos*, *fuisteis*, *fueron*
Future (regular): *seré*, *serás*, *será*, *seremos*, *seréis*, *serán* Conditional (regular): *sería*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *sea*, *seas*, *sea*, *seamos*, *seáis*, *sean*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *fuera*, *fueras*, *fuera*, *fuéramos*, *fuerais*, *fueran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *fuese*, *fueses*, *fuese*, *fuésemos*, *fueseis*, *fuesen*

(1) The accent on the imperative *sé* distinguishes it from the pronoun *se*.

(2) In Argentina and most other places where *vos* is used for *tú*, the present indicative form is *sos*: *sos muy inteligente* 'you're very intelligent', i.e. *eres muy inteligente*.

16.11.46 *Tener* 'to have'

Note the irregular preterite and future:

Gerund: *teniendo* Past participle: *tenido*
Imperative: (*tú*) ***ten***, (*vosotros*) *tened*, (*usted*) *tenga*, (*ustedes*) *tengan*
Present indicative: *teng**o**, tienes*, *tiene*, *tenemos*, *tenéis*, *tienen*
Imperfect (regular): *tenía*, *tenías*, *tenía*, *teníamos*, *teníais*, *tenían*
Preterite: *t**u**ve*, *t**u**viste*, *t**u**vo*, *t**u**vimos*, *t**u**visteis*, *t**u**vieron*
Future: *ten**dr**é*, *ten**dr**ás*, *ten**dr**á*, *ten**dr**emos*, *ten**dr**éis*, *ten**dr**án* Conditional: *ten**dr**ía*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *tenga*, *tengas*, *tenga*, *tengamos*, *tengáis*, *tengan*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *tuviera*, *tuvieras*, *tuviera*, *tuviéramos*, *tuvierais*, *tuvieran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *tuviese*, *tuvieses*, *tuviese*, *tuviésemos*, *tuvieseis*, *tuviesen*

(1) The *tú* imperative of compounds like *retener* 'to retain', *detener* 'to stop', has an accent: *retén*, *detén*. The accent should be dropped if a pronoun is added: *detente*, *retenlo*, etc.

16.11.47 *Traer* 'to bring'

Gerund *trayendo* Past participle *traído*
Imperative (*tú*) *trae*, (*vosotros*) *traed*, (*usted*) *traiga*, (*ustedes*) *traigan*
Present indicative: *trai**g**o*, *traes*, *trae*, *traemos*, *traéis*, *traen*
Imperfect (regular): *traía*, *traías*, *traía*, *traíamos*, *traíais*, *traían*
Preterite: *tr**aj**e*, *tr**aj**iste*, *tr**aj**o*, *tr**aj**imos*, *tr**aj**isteis*, *tr**aje**ron* (**not** **trajieron*)
Future (regular): *traeré*, etc. Conditional (regular): *traería*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *traiga*, *traigas*, *traiga*, *traigamos*, *traigáis*, *traigan*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *trajera*, *trajeras*, *trajera*, *trajéramos*, *trajerais*, *trajeran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *trajese*, *trajeses*, *trajese*, *trajésemos*, *trajeseis*, *trajesen*

(1) The preterite *truje*, *trujiste*, etc., is found in Golden-Age texts and occasionally in dialects.

16.11.48 *Valer* 'to be worth'

Gerund: *valiendo* Past participle: *valido*
Imperative: (*tú*) *vale*, (*vosotros*) *valed*, (*usted*) *val**g**a*, (*ustedes*) *val**g**an*
Present indicative: *val**g**o*, *vales*, *vale*, *valemos*, *valéis*, *valen*
Imperfect (regular): *valía*, *valías*, *valía*, *valíamos*, *valíais*, *valían*
Preterite (regular): *valí*, *valiste*, *valió*, *valimos*, *valisteis*, *valieron*
Future: *val**dr**é*, *val**dr**ás*, *val**dr**á*, *val**dr**emos*, *val**dr**éis*, *val**dr**án* Conditional: *val**dr**ía*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *valga*, *valgas*, *valga*, *valgamos*, *valgáis*, *valgan*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *valiera*, *valieras*, *valiera*, *valiéramos*, *valierais*, *valieran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *valiese*, *valieses*, *valiese*, *valiésemos*, *valieseis*, *valiesen*

16.11.49 *Venir* 'to come'

Gerund: *v**i**niendo* Past participle: *venido*
Imperative (*tú*) ***ven***, (*vosotros*) *venid*, (*usted*) *ven**g**a*, (*ustedes*) *ven**g**an*
Present indicative: *ven**g**o*, *vienes*, *viene*, *venimos*, *venís*, *vienen*
Imperfect (regular): *venía*, *venías*, *venía*, *veníamos*, *veníais*, *venían*
Preterite: *v**in**e*, *v**in**iste*, *v**in**o*, *v**in**imos*, *v**in**isteis*, *v**in**ieron*
Future: *ven**dr**é*, *ven**dr**ás*, *ven**dr**á*, *ven**dr**emos*, *ven**dr**éis*, *ven**dr**án* Conditional: *ven**dr**ía*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *venga*, *vengas*, *venga*, *vengamos*, *vengáis*, *vengan*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *viniera*, *vinieras*, *viniera*, *viniéramos*, *vinierais*, *vinieran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *viniese*, *vinieses*, *viniese*, *viniésemos*, *vinieseis*, *viniesen*

(1) The *tú* imperative and the third-person plural present indicative of compounds like *prevenir* 'to forewarn'/'to forecast' have an accent: *se prevén tormentas intensas* 'intense storms are forecast'.

16.11.50 *Ver* 'to see'

Gerund: *viendo* Past participle: ***visto***
Imperative: (*tú*) *ve*, (*vosotros*) *ved*, (*usted*) *vea*, (*ustedes*) *vean*
Present indicative: *veo*, *ves*, *ve*, *vemos*, *veis*, *ven*
Imperfect: *ve**í**a*, *ve**í**as*, *ve**í**a*, *ve**í**amos*, *ve**í**ais*, *ve**í**an*
Preterite: *vi* (no accent!), *viste*, *vio* (no accent!), *vimos*, *visteis*, *vieron*
Future (regular): *veré*, etc. Conditional (regular): *vería*, etc.
Present subjunctive: *vea*, *veas*, *vea*, *veamos*, *veáis*, *vean*

Imperfect subjunctive (*-ra*): *viera*, *vieras*, *viera*, *viéramos*, *vierais*, *vieran*
Imperfect subjunctive (*-se*): *viese*, *vieses*, *viese*, *viésemos*, *vieseis*, *viesen*

(1) The root verb is stressed in compound form in the first-person and third-person singular of the preterite and the third-person singular present indicative, e.g. *entreví* 'I glimpsed', *entrevió* '(s)he glimpsed', *prevé* '(s)he foresees', *previó* '(s)he foresaw'.

(2) The imperfect is slightly irregular since the expected forms would be **vía*, **vías*,**vía*, etc.

16.11.51 *Yacer* 'to lie' (as in 'he lay there') (US 'to lay')

Almost never used nowadays except on gravestones: *estar tumbado*, *estar acostado* are the usual translations. It is conjugated like *agradecer* (16.11.10), except for the alternative forms shown in brackets (regular forms sometimes appear in literary styles):

Imperative: (*usted*) *yazca* (*yaga/yazga*), (*ustedes*) *yazcan* (*yagan/yazgan*)
Present indicative: *yazco* (*yago*, *yazgo*), other persons regular
Present subjunctive: *yazca* (*yaga/yazga*), etc.

16.12 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 which 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.

abastecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
abolir: 16.11.2
aborrecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
abrir: past participle *abierto*
absolver: *mover* 16.11.28 past participle *absuelto*
abstenerse: *tener* 16.11.46
abstraer: *traer* 16.11.47
acaecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
acertar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
acontecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
acordar: *contar* 16.11.14
acostar(*se*): *contar* 16.11.14
acrecentar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
adherir: *sentir* 16.11.44
adolecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
adormecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
adquirir: 16.11.3
aducir: *producir* 16.11.37
advertir: *sentir* 16.11.44
agradecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
agredir: 16.11.4
alentar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
almorzar: *contar* 16.11.14 *z* > *c* before *e*
amanecer. *-cer* 16.11.10
amoblar: *contar* 16.11.14, but sometimes like *amueblar*: reg. in Latin America
andar: 16.11.5
anochecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
anteponer: *poner* 16.11.35
apacentar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
aparecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
apetecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
apostar: *contar* 16.11.14 reg. in meaning 'to post a sentry'
apretar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
aprobar: *contar* 16.11.14
argüir: *construir* 16.11.13
(*arrecirse*: *abolir* 16.11.2)
arrendar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
arrepentirse: *sentir* 16.11.44
ascender: *perder* 16.11.32
asentar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
asentir: *sentir* 16.11.44
asir: 16.11.6
asolar: *contar* 16.11.14 if it means 'to parch', but Academy allows regular conjugation for all meanings
atañer: see 16.4.10
atender: *perder* 16.11.32
atenerse: *tener* 16.11.46
aterrar: like *cerrar* 16.11.11 when = 'to knock down', reg. when = 'to terrify'
(*aterirse*: *abolir* 16.11.2)
atraer: *traer* 16.11.47
atravesar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
atribuir: *construir* 16.11.13
avenir: *venir* 16.11.49
aventar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
avergonzar: *contar* 16.11.14 *z* > *c* before *e*: diphthong spelt *üe*, e.g: subjunctive *avergüence*, etc.
balbucir: 16.11.7
bendecir: *maldecir* 16.11.27
(*blandir*: *abolir* 16.11.2)
bruñir: *gruñir* see 16.4.10,
bullir: *zambullir*(*se*) see 16.4.10
caber: 16.11.8

caer: 16.11.9
calentar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
carecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
cegar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
g > *gu* before *e*
ceñir: *reñir* 16.11.40
cerner: *perder* 16.11.32
cernir: *discernir* 16.11.17
cerrar: 16.11.11
circunscribir: irreg. past participle *circunscrito*
cocer: 16.11.12
colar: *contar* 16.11.14
colegir: *pedir* 16.11.31
-g > *j* before *a*, *o*
colgar: *contar* 16.11.14
g > *gu* before *e*
comenzar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
z > *c* before *e*
compadecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
comparecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
competir: *pedir* 16.11.31
complacer: *-cer* 16.11.10
componer: *poner* 16.11.35
comprobar: *contar* 16.11.14
concebir: *pedir* 16.11.31
concernir: *discernir* 16.11.17
concertar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
concluir: *construir* 16.11.13
concordar: *contar* 16.11.14
condescender: *perder* 16.11.32
condolerse: *mover* 16.11.28
conducir: *producir* 16.11.37
conferir: *sentir* 16.11.44
confesar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
confluir: *construir* 16.11.13
conmover: *mover* 16.11.28
conocer: *-cer* 16.11.10
conseguir: *pedir* 16.11.31
gu > *g* before *a*, *o*
consentir: *sentir* 16.11.44
consolar: *contar* 16.11.14
consonar: *contar* 16.11.14
constituir: *construir* 16.11.13
constreñir: *reñir* 16.11.40
construir: 16.11.13
contar: 16.11.14
contender: *perder* 16.11.32
contener: *tener* 16.11.46
contradecir: 16.11.16
contraer: *traer* 16.11.47
contrahacer: *hacer* 16.11.23
contraponer: *poner* 16.11.35
contravenir: *venir* 16.11.49
contribuir: *construir* 16.11.13
controvertir: *sentir* 16.11.44
convalecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
convenir: *venir* 16.11.49
convertir: *sentir* 16.11.44
corregir: *pedir* 16.11.31
g > *j* before *a*, *o*
corroer: *roer* 16.11.41
costar: *contar* 16.11.14
crecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
creer: *poseer* 16.11.36
cubrir: irreg. past part: *cubierto*
dar: 16.11.15
decaer: *caer* 16.11.9
decir: 16.11.16
decrecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
deducir: *producir* 16.11.37
defender: *perder* 16.11.32
deferir: *sentir* 16.11.44
degollar: *contar* 16.11.14 diphthong spelt *üe*
demoler: *mover* 16.11.28
demostrar: *contar* 16.11.14
denegar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
g > *gu* before *e*
denostar: *contar* 16.11.14
deponer: *poner* 16.11.35
derretir: *pedir* 16.11.31
derrocar: nowadays regular: *c* > *qu* before *e*
desacertar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
desacordar: *contar* 16.11.14
desagradecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
desalentar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
desandar: *andar* 16.11.5
desaparecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
desapretar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
desaprobar: *contar* 16.11.14
desasosegar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
g > *gu* before *e*
desatender: *perder* 16.11.32
desavenir: *venir* 16.11.49
descender: *perder* 16.11.32
desceñir: *reñir* 16.11.40
descolgar: *contar* 16.11.14
g > *gu* before *e*
descollar: *contar* 16.11.14
descomponer: *poner* 16.11.35
desconcertar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
desconocer: *-cer* 16.11.10
desconsolar: *contar* 16.11.14
descontar: *contar* 16.11.14
desconvenir: *venir* 16.11.49
describir: past participle *descrito*
descubrir: past participle *descubierto*
desdecir: 16.11.16
desempedrar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
desengrosar: *contar* 16.11.14
desentenderse: *perder* 16.11.32
desenterrar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
desenvolver: *mover* 16.11.28 past part: *desenvuelto*
desfallecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
desgobernar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
deshacer: *hacer* 16.11.23
deshelar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
desherrar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
desleír: *reír* 16.11.39
deslucir: *lucir* 16.11.26
desmembrar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
desmentir: *sentir* 16.11.44
desmerecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
desobedecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
desoír: *oír* 16.11.29
desollar: *contar* 16.11.14
despedir: *pedir* 16.11.31
despedrar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
despertar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
despezar: *cerrar* 16.11.11 usually *despiezar*, reg. *z* > *c* before *e*
desplacer: *-cer* 16.11.10
desplegar: *cerrar* 16.11.11 *g* > *gu* before *e*; now often regular
despoblar: *contar* 16.11.14
desproveer: *poseer* 16.11.36 past participle *desprovisto*/*desproveído*
desteñir: *reñir* 16.11.40
desterrar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
destituir: *construir* 16.11.13
destruir: *construir* 16.11.13
desvanecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
desvergonzarse: *contar* 16.11.14 *z* > *c* before *e*; diphthong spelt *üe*

detener: *tener* 16.11.46
detraer: *traer* 16.11.47
devenir: 16.11.49
devolver: *mover* 16.11.28
past participle *devuelto*
diferir: *sentir* 16.11.44
digerir: *sentir* 16.11.44
diluir: *construir* 16.11.13
discernir: 16.11.17
disentir: *sentir* 16.11.44
disminuir: *construir* 16.11.13
disolver: *mover* 16.11.28;
past participle *disuelto*
disponer: *poner* 16.11.35
distender: *perder* 16.11.32
distraer: *traer* 16.11.47
distribuir: *construir* 16.11.13
divertir: *sentir* 16.11.44
doler: *mover* 16.11.28
dormir: 16.11.18
elegir: *pedir* 16.11.31
g > *j* before *a*, *o*
embebecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
embellecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
embestir: *pedir* 16.11.31
embravecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
embrutecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
empedrar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
empequeñecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
empezar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
z > *c* before *e*
empobrecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
enaltecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
enardecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
encanecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
encarecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
encender: *perder* 16.11.32
encerrar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
encomendar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
encontrar: *contar* 16.11.14
encubrir: past participle
encubierto
endurecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
enflaquecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
enfurecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
engrandecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
engreírse: *reír* 16.11.39
engrosar: *contar* 16.11.14
now often reg. Academy
prefers irreg. conjugation
engullir: *zambullir* see 16.4.10
enloquecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
enmendar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
enmohecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
enmudecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
ennegrecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
ennoblecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
enorgullecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
enriquecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
enronquecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
ensangrentar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
ensoberbecer(*se*)*-cer* 16.11.10
ensordecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
entender: *perder* 16.11.32
enternecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
enterrar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
entreabrir: past participle
entreabierto
entredecir: *decir* 16.11.16
entreoír: *oír* 16.11.29
entretener: *tener* 16.11.46
entrever: *ver* 16.11.50
entristecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
entumecer(*se*)*-cer*: 16.11.10
envanecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
envejecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
envilecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
envolver: *mover* 16.11.28
past participle *envuelto*
equivaler: *valer* 16.11.48
erguir: 16.11.19
errar: 16.11.20
escabullirse: *zambullirse* see
16.4.10
escarmentar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
escarnecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
escocer: *cocer* 16.11.12
escribir: past participle
escrito
esforzar. *contar* 16.11.14
z > *c* before *e*
establecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
estar: 16.11.21
estremecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
estreñir: *reñir* 16.11.40
excluir: *construir* 16.11.13
expedir: *pedir* 16.11.31
exponer: *poner* 16.11.35
extender: *perder* 16.11.32
extraer: *traer* 16.11.47
fallecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
favorecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
florecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
fluir: *construir* 16.11.13
fortalecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
forzar: *contar* 16.11.14
z > *c* before *e*
fregar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
g > *gu* before *e*
freír: *reír* 16.11.39
past participle *freído/frito*
gemir: *pedir* 16.11.31
gobernar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
gruñir: see 16.4.10
guarecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
guarnecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
haber: 16.11.22
hacer: 16.11.23
heder: *perder* 16.11.32
helar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
henchir: *pedir* 16.11.31
hender: *perder* 16.11.32
hendir: *discernir* 16.11.17
herir: *sentir* 16.11.44
herrar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
hervir: *sentir* 16.11.44
holgar: *contar* 16.11.14
g > *gu* before *e*
hollar: *contar* 16.11.14
huir: *construir* 16.11.13
humedecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
impedir: *pedir* 16.11.31
imponer: *poner* 16.11.35
imp: sing: *impón*
incensar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
incluir: *construir* 16.11.13
indisponer: *poner* 16.11.35
inducir: *producir* 16.11.37
inferir: *sentir* 16.11.44
influir: *construir* 16.11.13
ingerir: *sentir* 16.11.44
injerir: *sentir* 16.11.44
inquirir: *adquirir* 16.11.3
inscribir: past participle
escrito
instituir: *construir* 16.11.13
instruir: *construir* 16.11.13
interferir: *sentir* 16.11.44
interponer: *poner* 16.11.35
intervenir: *venir* 16.11.49
introducir: *producir* 16.11.37
intuir: *construir* 16.11.13
invernar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
Academy prefers
regular conjugation
invertir: *sentir* 16.11.44

investir: *pedir* 16.11.31
ir: 16.11.24
jugar: 16.11.25
languidecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
leer: *poseer* 16.11.36
llover: *mover* 16.11.28
lucir: 16.11.26
maldecir: 16.11.27
manifestar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
mantener: *tener* 16.11.46
medir: *pedir* 16.11.31
mentar: *cerrar* 16.11.11 (often regular)
mentir: *sentir* 16.11.44
merecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
merendar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
moler: *mover* 16.11.28
morder: *mover* 16.11.28
morir: 16.11.18
mostrar: *contar* 16.11.14
mover: 16.11.28
mullir: *zambullir* see 16.4.10
nacer: *-cer* 16.11.10
negar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
g > *gu* before *e*
nevar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
obedecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
obscurecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
obstruir: *construir* 16.11.13
obtener: *tener* 16.11.46
ofrecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
oír: 16.11.29
oler: 16.11.30
oponer: *poner* 16.11.35
oscurecer: *-cer* 16.11.10 (*obscurecer* is an older spelling)
pacer: *-cer* 16.11.10
padecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
palidecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
parecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
pedir: 16.11.31
pensar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
perecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
permanecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
perseguir: *pedir* 16.11.31
gu > *g* before *a*, *o*
pertenecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
pervertir: *sentir* 16.11.44
placer: 16.11.33
plegar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
g > *gu* before *e*
poblar: *contar* 16.11.14
poder: 16.11.34
podrir: variant of *pudrir*, accepted in Lat. Am. rare in Spain: *-u-* used for all other forms save past part: *podrido*
poner: 16.11.35
poseer: 16.11.36
posponer: *poner* 16.11.35
tú imperative *pospón*
predecir: 16.11.16
predisponer: *poner* 16.11.35
preferir: *sentir* 16.11.44
prescribir: past participle *prescrito*
presuponer: *poner* 16.11.35
prevalecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
prevaler: *valer* 16.11.48
prevenir: *venir* 16.11.49
prever: *ver* 16.11.50
probar: *contar* 16.11.14
producir: 16.11.37
proferir: *sentir* 16.11.44
promover: *mover* 16.11.28
proponer: *poner* 16.11.35
proseguir: *pedir* 16.11.31
gu > *g* before *a*
prostituir: *construir* 16.11.13
proveer: *poseer* 16.11.36 past participle *provisto*/*proveído*
provenir: *venir* 16.11.49
pudrir: regular; see also *podrir*
quebrar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
querer: 16.11.38
raer: *caer* 16.11.9 (*rayo* is a rarer alternative to *raigo*)
reaparecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
reblandecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
recaer: *caer* 16.11.9
recluir: *construir* 16.11.13
recocer: *cocer* 16.11.12
recomendar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
reconocer: *-cer* 16.11.10
reconvenir: *venir* 16.11.49
recordar: *contar* 16.11.14
recostar(*se*): *contar* 16.11.14
reducir: *producir* 16.11.37
reelegir: *pedir* 16.11.31
g > *j* before *a*, *o*
referir: *sentir* 16.11.44
reforzar: *contar* 16.11.14
z > *c* before *e*
refregar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
g > *gu* before *e*
regar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
g > *gu* before *e*
regimentar: *cerrar* 16.11.11 also regular
regir: *pedir* 16.11.31
g > *j* before *a*, *o*
rehacer: *hacer* 16.11.23
rehuir: *construir* 16.11.13
reír: 16.11.39
rejuvenecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
remendar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
remorder: *mover* 16.11.28
remover: *mover* 16.11.28
rendir: *pedir* 16.11.31
renegar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
g > *gu* before *e*
renovar: *contar* 16.11.14
reñir: 16.11.40
repetir: *pedir* 16.11.31
replegar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
g > *gu* before *e*
repoblar: *contar* 16.11.14
reponer: *poner* 16.11.35
reprobar: *contar* 16.11.14
reproducir: *producir* 16.11.37
requebrar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
requerir: *sentir* 16.11.44
resentirse: *sentir* 16.11.44
resollar: *contar* 16.11.14
resolver: *mover* 16.11.28 past participle *resuelto*
resonar: *contar* 16.11.14
resplandecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
restablecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
restituir: *construir* 16.11.13
restregar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
g > *gu* before *e*
retemblar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
retener: *tener* 16.11.46
reteñir: *reñir* 16.11.40
retorcer: *cocer* 16.11.12
c > *z* before *a*, *o*
retraer: *traer* 16.11.47
retribuir: *construir* 16.11.13
retrotraer: *traer* 16.11.47

reventar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
reverdecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
reverter: *perder* 16.11.32
revestir: *pedir* 16.11.31
revolar: *contar* 16.11.14
revolcar(*se*) *contar* 16.11.14
c > *qu* before *e*
revolver: *mover* 16.11.28
past participle *revuelto*
robustecer: *-cer* 16.11.10
rodar: *contar* 16.11.14
roer: 16.11.41
rogar: *contar* 16.11.14
g > *gu* before *e*
romper: past participle *roto*
saber: 16.11.42
salir: 16.11.43
satisfacer: *hacer* 16.11.23
seducir: *producir* 16.11.37
segar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
g > *gu* before *e*
seguir: *pedir* 16.11.31
gu > *g* before *a* or *o*
sembrar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
sentar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
sentir: 16.11.44
ser: 16.11.45
serrar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
servir: *pedir* 16.11.31
sobre(*e*)*ntender*: *perder* 16.11.32
sobreponer: *poner* 16.11.35
sobresalir: *salir* 16.11.43
sobrevenir: *venir* 16.11.49
sofreír: *reír* 16.11.39, past participle *sofrito*
soldar: *contar* 16.11.14
soler: *mover* 16.11.28
future, conditional and past and future subjunctives not used
soltar: *contar* 16.11.14
sonar: *contar* 16.11.14
sonreír: *reír* 16.11.39
soñar: *contar* 16.11.14
sosegar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
g > *gu* before *e*
sostener: *tener* 16.11.46
soterrar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
subarrendar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
subscribir: see *suscribir*
subvenir: *venir* 16.11.49
subvertir: *sentir* 16.11.44
sugerir: *sentir* 16.11.44
suponer: *poner* 16.11.35
suscribir past participle *suscrito*
sustituir: *construir* 16.11.13
sustraer: *traer* 16.11.47
tañer: see 16.4.10
temblar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
templar usually regular but often like *cerrar* 16.11.11 in Mex:
tender: *perder* 16.11.32
tener: 16.11.46
tentar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
teñir: *reñir* 16.11.40
torcer: *cocer* 16.11.12
c > *z* before *a*, *o*
tostar: *contar* 16.11.14
traducir: *producir* 16.11.37
traer: 16.11.47
transcribir: past participle *transcrito*
transferir: *sentir* 16.11.44
transgredir: 16.11.4
transponer: *poner* 16.11.35
trascender: *perder* 16.11.32
trasegar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
g > *gu* before *e*
traslucir: *lucir* 16.11.26
trasponer: *poner* 16.11.35
trastrocar: *contar* 16.11.14
c > *qu* before *e*
trocar: *contar* 16.11.14
c > *qu* before *e*
tronar: *contar* 16.11.14
tropezar: *cerrar* 16.11.11
z > *c* before *e*
tullir: see 16.4.10
valer: 16.11.48
venir: 16.11.49
ver: 16.11.50
verter: *perder* 16.11.32
vestir: *pedir* 16.11.31
volar: *contar* 16.11.14
volcar: *contar* 16.11.14
c > *qu* before *e*
volver: *mover* 16.11.28
past participle *vuelto*
yacer: 16.11.51
zaherir: *sentir* 16.11.44
zambullir: see 16.4.10, item 6

16.13 The formation of the compound tenses

The forms of the compound tenses are completely predictable provided one knows the full conjugation of *haber* (16.11.22) and the past participle of the verb:

The conjugation of the compound tenses of *ver* 'to see' is shown here as an example: Note the irregular past participle, *visto*:

INDICATIVE

Perfect 'I have seen', etc.		**Pluperfect 'I had seen', etc.**	
he visto	*hemos visto*	*había visto*	*habíamos visto*
has visto	*habéis visto*	*habías visto*	*habíais visto*
ha visto	*han visto*	*había visto*	*habían visto*

Future perfect 'I shall have seen', etc.

habré visto	*habremos visto*
habrás visto	*habréis visto*
habrá visto	*habrán visto*

Conditional 'I would have seen', etc.

habría visto	*habríamos visto*
habrías visto	*habríais visto*
habría visto	*habrían visto*

***Pretérito anterior* 'I had seen', etc. (infrequently used. See 18.4)**

hube visto	*hubimos visto*
hubiste visto	*hubisteis visto*
hubo visto	*hubieron visto*

SUBJUNCTIVE

Perfect

haya visto	*hayamos visto*
hayas visto	*hayáis visto*
haya visto	*hayan visto*

Imperfect

-*ra* form		-*se* form	
hubiera visto	*hubiéramos visto*	*hubiese visto*	*hubiésemos visto*
hubieras visto	*hubierais visto*	*hubieses visto*	*hubieseis visto*
hubiera visto	*hubieran visto*	*hubiese visto*	*hubiesen visto*

17 Use of indicative (non-continuous) verb tenses

The indicative tenses discussed in this chapter are:

- The present tense (*hablo*, *vamos*, etc.) (Section 17.3)
- The preterite tense (*hablé*, *fuimos*, etc.) (Section 17.4)
- The imperfect tense (*hablaba*, *íbamos*, etc.) (Section 17.5)
- The future tense (*hablaré*, *iré*, etc.) (Section 17.6)
- The conditional tense (*hablaría*, *iría*, etc.) (Section 17.7)

Continuous verb forms (*estoy hablando*, *estamos trabajando*, etc.) are discussed in Chapter 19. The subjunctive is discussed in Chapter 20.

The compound indicative tenses – *he hablado*, *había visto*, *hubo hecho*, *habrá escrito*, *habría ido*, *hubiera pensado*, etc. – are discussed separately in Chapter 18. The forms of regular and irregular verbs are shown in Chapter 16.

17.1 Names of the tenses

There is little agreement among grammarians about the names of the Spanish tenses. Another source of confusion for English speakers is the fact that *pretérito* simply means 'past' (*las glorias pretéritas* = 'bygone/past glories'), whereas the English 'preterite' (US 'preterit') refers to a specific Spanish past tense. Common variants are listed below; the Academy's current usage is in bold:

Name used in this book	Example	Spanish names
Present indicative	*hablas, tienes*	***presente de indicativo***
Imperfect indicative	*hablaba, tenías*	***pretérito imperfecto***, ***copretérito***
Preterite	*hablé, tuviste*	***pretérito perfecto simple***, *pretérito indefinido, pretérito, perfecto absoluto*
Perfect indicative	*he hablado, has tenido*	***pretérito perfecto compuesto***, *pretérito perfecto actual, antepresente*
Pluperfect indicative	*había hablado, habías tenido*	***pretérito pluscuamperfecto***, *antecopretérito*
Future indicative	*hablaré, tendrás*	***futuro simple***, *futuro imperfecto*
Conditional	*hablaría, tendrías*	***condicional simple***, *pospretérito, potencial, futuro hipotético*

17.2 Tense in Spanish: general remarks

The following points are important:

(**a**) The name 'present tense' for forms like *hablo*, *voy*, is misleading since this form can also express future, past, and timeless statements. See 17.3.

(**b**) The name 'future tense' for forms like *hablaré*, *irá*, is misleading since it can also be used for suppositions and estimates, and there is also more than one way of expressing the future. See 17.6.

(**c**) The difference between the imperfect and the preterite tenses, e.g. between *hablaba* and *hablé*, may confuse English speakers since both can be translated by the English simple past, e.g. 'I spoke', even though they mean different things: see 17.4.

(**d**) Spanish resembles English and differs from French, German and Italian in having a full range of continuous forms: *está lloviendo* 'it's raining', *estabas pensando* 'you were thinking', *he estado comiendo* 'I have been eating'. However, the similarity to the English progressive forms ('I'm going', 'you're waiting', etc.) is misleading; see 19.1.2 for details.

(**e**) The difference in meaning between the preterite *hablé* 'I spoke' and the perfect *he hablado* 'I *have* spoken' is respected in Spanish and English, but blurred or lost in spoken French, Italian and German. However, the relationship between the Spanish tenses is not exactly the same as between 'I spoke' and 'I have spoken': see particularly 18.2. Use of the perfect tense is also much affected by regional variations.

17.3 Uses of the present indicative tense

For the use of the present indicative in conditional sentences, e.g. *si sales, compra pan* 'if you go out, buy some bread', see 29.1–2. For the use of the present indicative as a future tense see 17.6.3.

17.3.1 Present indicative tense to indicate timeless or habitual events that still occur

The present indicative tense is used to express eternal or timeless truths, or habitual states or events that are still occurring in the present:

Llueve mucho en Irlanda	It rains a lot in Ireland
Fumo más de cuarenta al día	I smoke more than forty a day
Marta es venezolana	Marta's Venezuelan
Tengo tarjeta de crédito	I have a credit card
Me deprime comer sola (CMG, Sp.)	Eating on my own depresses me
Yo me sé de memoria tus chistecitos	I know your feeble jokes by heart

(ES, Mex., dialogue. See 30.2.1 note 3 for this use of *me*)

(1) As in English, use of a continuous tense for a habitual event can make it in some way unusual, surprising or temporary, i.e. not necessarily a habit: *Alicia estaba bebiendo más últimamente* (GZ, Mex.) 'Alicia was drinking more lately', *estás fumando mucho* 'you're smoking a lot (lately)'.

17.3.2 The present indicative tense for events happening *now*

The Spanish non-continuous present indicative can also show that an action is actually happening *now*: *duermen* means 'they are sleeping' as well as 'they sleep'. English speakers are often confused by this overlap with the continuous: to say 'he comes' for 'he is coming' sounds archaic.

See Chapter 19 for more on this point. The following examples show that there is often only a slight difference between the simple present and the continuous present:

Escribe/Está escribiendo una novela	(S)he's writing a novel
¿Qué haces?/¿Qué estás haciendo? (they mean the same when they express surprise)	What are you doing?
Nieva/Está nevando (but see 19.1.3)	It's snowing
La puerta necesita/está necesitando una mano de pintura (from *NGLE* 23.5f)	The door needs a coat of paint

In the last example, the *NGLE* notes that the continuous form makes the need more urgent.

17.3.3 Present indicative used for states as opposed to actions

The simple present, not the continuous, is normally used for states rather than actions, e.g. *parece cansada* 'she seems tired/she's looking tired', *brilla la luna* 'the moon is shining'. See 19.3b for discussion.

17.3.4 Present tense used for very recent or imminent events

The simple present is much used for events that happen in the present but are not necessarily actually in progress *now*, e.g. for imminent or very recent events:

Me caso	I'm getting married
¿Qué dices? (= *¿qué estás diciendo?* when indignation or surprise are intended)	What did you say (just then)?' or 'What do you say?' or 'What are you saying?'
¡Que me ahogo/caigo!	I'm drowning/falling!
¡Ya voy!	I'm coming!
Merino pasa la pelota a Andreas	Merino passes the ball to Andreas
¿Vienes?	Are you coming?

(1) Important: in the above examples the events are either imminent or have just happened. English speakers constantly misuse the Spanish continuous for this sort of statement, as in ?*mi hermano se está casando* 'my brother's getting married' when they mean *se casa* or *se va a casar*. See 19.1.2–3 for further discussion.

17.3.5 The *presente histórico* or historic present

The present tense is used much more than in English to refer to the past as a way of dramatizing a story. This device is common in popular English ('Annie walks in and says to me . . .') and it may sound unfortunate in formal English styles, but it is common in both literary and spoken Spanish:

¿Cuántos pozos quedan por los alrededores? — Sólo dos por ver —el rastreador hace un gesto escéptico—: No creo que valga la pena—. No importa, verifiquen —lo interrumpe el capitán—. Tienen que estar de vuelta antes de que oscurezca, sargento.	'How many wells are there left round here?' 'Only two left to inspect.' The tracker makes a sceptical gesture. 'I don't think it's worth the trouble.' 'It doesn't matter. Check them.' the captain interrupts him 'You've got to be back before it gets dark,
Bueno, pues me llama y me dice que por qué no nos vemos. ¿Vernos? ¿Dónde?, le digo yo. En cualquier sitio, me dice. Pero, ¿qué es lo que les pasa a tus amiguitas?, le	Anyway, he calls me and asks me why we don't meet. 'Meet!? Where?', I say to him. 'Anywhere,' he says. 'But what's happening to

digo. Es que no son tan guapas como tú, me dice. A buenas horas lo has descubierto, le digo (SP, Sp., dialogue. Woman about her ex-husband)	your lady friends?' I say to him. 'Actually they're not as attractive as you,' he tells me. 'A fine time to discover that,' I say to him

(1) As in English, this use of the historic present is frequent in headlines: *el Papa carga contra el laicismo de España* '(*El País, Sp.*) 'Pope attacks secularism of Spain' (he had done this the day before), *Perfecciona mexicano cirugía fetal* (*La Reforma*, Mex.) 'Mexican perfects foetal surgery'.

(2) The historic present is almost always used after *por poco* 'all but/nearly' (in Mexico often *por poco y . . .*), and often after *casi* 'nearly': *me caí por unas escaleras y por poco/casi me rompo el tobillo* 'I fell down some stairs and nearly broke my ankle', *casi me mata, lo cual no era nada difícil por aquel entonces* (ABE, Pe.) 'she nearly killed me, which wasn't at all difficult at that time', *por poquito y no me caso* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'I very nearly didn't get married'. Exceptions can be found on both continents: *por poco me hizo llorar de lo cariñosa que es* (MVLl, Pe., dialogue) 'she's so affectionate she nearly made me cry'.

(3) A kind of historic present can occur in contexts in which the meaning is 'not yet'. Standing on the platform, one could say *el tren no llega* 'the train's not here yet' for *no ha llegado todavía* (in parts of Latin America . . . *no llegó todavía*). This use of the present in such sentences is common in Chile and Argentina, but less common elsewhere (*NGLE* 23.6i).

17.3.6 Present tense used as an imperative

This is frequently used in everyday speech to make strong orders: *tú te callas* 'you just keep quiet'. All matters connected with the imperative are discussed in Chapter 21.

17.3.7 Use of the present to ask permission

The present is much used when asking for someone's consent:

¿Te lo mando yo?	Shall/Should I send it to you?
¿Escribo a los abuelos?	Should I write to our grandparents?
¿Nos vamos?, preguntó él, y ella en respuesta le tomó la mano y sin soltársela salieron del restaurante (EP, Mex. dialogue)	'Shall we go?' he asked, and in reply she took his hand and without letting go of it they left the restaurant.

17.3.8 Use of the present as a future tense

Spanish makes constant use of the simple present to refer to the future: *mañana vamos a California* 'we're going to California tomorrow', *te veo luego* 'I'll see you later'. See 17.6.3.

17.3.9 Present in sentences like 'it's the first time I've seen him' and other expressions of time

English uses the perfect in sentences of the type 'this is the first time that . . .' and 'I've been . . . for *n* days/weeks', etc. Spanish uses the present:

Es la primera vez que la veo	It's the first time I've seen her
Desde hace dos días estoy tratando de comunicarme con el señor Morales (*Prensalibre*, Guat., dialogue)	I've been trying to contact Mr Morales for two days

The past tense used in such constructions is the imperfect: see 17.5.3. See 36.2 for more on the tenses used in expressions of time.

17.4 The preterite: general remarks

The Spanish preterite describes events that were completed in the past or are *viewed* as completed in the past (see 17.4.3 for the reason for this distinction). Occasionally it highlights the fact that an event is beginning in the past: see 17.4.7.

English constantly fails to distinguish the preterite from the imperfect: 'I drank' may be *bebí – bebí el café de un tirón* 'I drank my/the coffee in one gulp' – or *bebía: estuve pensando mientras bebía el café* 'I was thinking as I drank (i.e. 'was drinking') my/the coffee'.

Some students seem to think that the preterite refers to events that are 'further in the past' than the imperfect, but both preterite and imperfect tenses are past tenses. The difference is not a question of recency versus remoteness: *los pterodáctilos* ***tenían*** *alas* 'pterodactyls had wings' is correct; **. . . tuvieron alas* is not.

The preterite is used in many varieties of Latin-American Spanish where the perfect tense is used in Spain and in some other countries, e.g. Peru and Bolivia: *Miguel no llegó todavía* sounds Latin-American to persons from Central Spain who say . . . *no ha llegado todavía* just as 'they didn't arrive yet' sounds American to Britons who say 'they haven't arrived yet'. See 18.2 for discussion.

(1) Technical note: many grammarians describe the preterite as 'perfective' in aspect (i.e. it denotes completion of an event). The Academy considers that aspect plays an important part in the grammar of the Spanish verb (*NGLE 23.2c*), but some linguists deny this. Whatever the truth of the matter, we avoid the terms 'perfective' and 'imperfective' aspect on the grounds that they may confuse learners, as explained at 17.4.3.

17.4.1 Preterite used to indicate single events or states or sets of events or states completed in the past

A single completed past event or state, or a set of completed past events or states, is expressed by the preterite. This is the basic use of the preterite:

La Segunda Guerra Mundial empezó en 1939	World War Two began in 1939
Hubo una explosión	There was an explosion
Donde antes hubo césped, ahora había una tierra resquebrajada y seca (RM, Sp.)	Where once there was a lawn there was now a patch of broken, dry earth
A nadie le gusta contratar a un hombre que estuvo en la cárcel (EM, Mex., dialogue)	No one likes to hire a man who was/has been in jail
Lo primero que escribí fue un cuento (AGa, Sp.)	The first thing I wrote was a short story
Martín la llamó cuatro veces	Martín called her four times
Lo escribió ochenta veces	(S)he wrote it eighty times

(1) The preterite is used to describe a series of completed events that occurred separately (in whichever order), as in *di un paseo, fui a casa, sentí miedo, y aquí estoy* (LS, Ch., dialogue) 'I went for a walk, went home, felt scared, and here I am'. In lists of events the imperfect tense suggests that they occurred simultaneously or habitually. Compare *lloraba, gritaba, se reía* . . . '(s)he was weeping, shouting, laughing' (at the same time) or '(s)he used to weep', etc.

(2) The 'historic present' – *Laura entra y me dice . . .*'Laura comes in and says to me . . .' – can also be used for completed events, but it is either literary in style or colloquial. See 17.3.5.

(3) The imperfect is occasionally also used in newspaper language for single completed events. See 17.5.8.

(4) Compare *lo hicimos tres veces* 'we did it three times' and *lo hacíamos tres veces* 'we used to do it three times'. The latter does not refer to a specific total number of events.

17.4.2 Preterite for events occurring throughout a finite period

The preterite tense must be used for events that continued throughout a finite period of time. By 'finite' is meant a period of time of a specific length, i.e. one whose beginning and end are stated or clearly implied:

Estuve destinado en Bilbao dos años	I was stationed in Bilbao for two years
Durante el viaje, Eugenio estuvo muy comunicativo (SP, Spain).	During the journey Eugenio was very communicative
Los dinosaurios reinaron sobre la tierra durante millones de años	The dinosaurs reigned on earth for millions of years
Te olvidas de los años que trabajamos juntos	You're forgetting the years we worked together
Durante esos días Lorenzo se sintió muy cerca de Erro (EP, Mex.)	During those days Lorenzo felt very close to Erro
Durante años no pudimos hablar de otra cosa (GGM, Col., dialogue)	For years we could talk of nothing else
La fiesta fue un éxito	The party was a success (from start to finish)
Fue un día magnífico	It was a magnificent day (from start to finish)

(1) Important: the question is whether the period ended, not the action: *habló durante dos horas, y luego continuó hablando durante tres horas más* '(s)he talked for two hours and then went on talking for three more hours' is possible. For the optional alternative *estuvo hablando durante dos horas* see 19.2.3.

(2) Compare the last two examples in the columns with *cuando llegué vi que la fiesta era/estaba siendo un éxito* 'when I arrived I saw that the party was a success' (it wasn't over yet), and *como **hacía** un día magnífico, fuimos al zoo* 'as it was a lovely day, we went to the zoo' (but it may have rained later in the day).

(3) Words like *siempre* and *nunca* often indicate actions or states continuing throughout the whole of a period of time: *siempre procuré pasarlo bien* 'I always tried to have a good time', *siempre estuve muy agradecido con él* (EM, Mex., dialogue) 'I was always very grateful to him', *nunca Fermín Eguren me pudo ver* (JLB, Arg., dialogue) 'Fermín Eguren never was able to stand me' (i.e. throughout the time I'm referring to, but his hostility may still last into the present). But they may refer to habitual actions that occur over no specified period and therefore require the imperfect, as in *antes siempre ibas a misa* 'you always used to go to Mass', *nunca hacía tanto calor como ahora* 'it never used to be as hot as now'.

(4) In sentences involving phrases like *todos los días*, *todos los años*, either tense may be possible: see the next section.

(5) Actions performed throughout a period of time can be habitual, in which case the imperfect is used, as in *hablaba durante tres horas* (or *solía hablar durante tres horas*) '(s)he used to speak for three hours', i.e. on an unspecified number of different occasions, *Mario siempre se quedaba tres*

días en mi casa 'Mario always stayed at my house for three days', also an unspecified number of occasions.

17.4.3 Use of the preterite to denote habitual events

The imperfect tense is usually used to describe habitual events in the past (see 17.5.2), but the preterite can also describe habitual or prolonged events in the past and this often confuses students.

In *mi padre fumaba/fumó mucho cuando era joven* 'my father smoked a lot when he was young', either tense is possible, whether or not he carried on smoking after his youth and whether or not he is still alive – it is this possibility that makes the linguistic terms 'perfective' or 'completed aspect' and 'imperfective' or 'non-complete aspect' unhelpful for learners of Spanish.

The imperfect tense views the habit as in progress *at the time* referred to. The preterite looks back on it as an event viewed as a whole, i.e. something that continued *throughout a period*, e.g. his youth, those years, that period I'm talking about, etc., even though it may have continued thereafter. English ignores this difference of viewpoint so in the following examples the difference between the preterite and imperfect is virtually untranslatable:

Mi niñez fue/era feliz	My childhood was happy
Recuerdo que llovió/llovía mucho cuando vivíamos en Canadá	I remember it rained a lot when we lived in Canada
Alonso se levantó/se levantaba todos los días a las ocho para ir al trabajo (usually *levantaba*)	Alonso got up every day at eight to go to work
Cuando vivíamos juntos no tuvimos/teníamos problemas (*teníamos*) more usual	When we lived together we had no problems
Siempre dormía como durmió su padre, con el arma escondida dentro de la funda de la almohada (G GM, Col. *Durmió como dormía . . . su padre* would have meant the same)	He always used to sleep as his father (had) slept, with his gun hidden in his pillowcase
El nuevo secretario fue el poeta Jaime Torres Bodet, quien declaró: "Yo no soy político" (JA, Mex.)	The new secretary was JTB who declared 'I'm not a politician'
Stalin fue una presencia habitual en la casa de los Alliluyev (RM, Sp.)	Stalin was a habitual visitor in the Alliluyevs' house

(1) Truly permanent characteristics – e.g. ethnicity, permanent size, identity – are expressed by the imperfect since they tend to be part of a general background. Thus *la casa era muy grande* 'the house was very big', *mi padre era indio/blanco* 'my father was Indian/white', *Miguel hablaba vasco* 'Miguel could speak Basque'. But if the qualities are acquired or developed, *fue* is not impossible: cf. *su padre fue un hombre muy alto, muy guapo, muy inteligente* (AG, Sp.).

However, students are advised to use the imperfect in such sentences since use of the preterite can sound very literary, as in *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* (JLB, Arg., more usually *sabía . . .*) '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'; in this case *fue* is possible for *era*, but *supo* sounds strange.

17.4.4 Use of the preterite to denote an event that has reached completion

The preterite may indicate that a process has finally reached completion, as in:

Una vez el dinero estuvo en mis manos, compré la casa	As soon as the money came into my hands, I bought the house
No reconocí a Selina hasta que estuvo delante de mí (SP, Sp.)	I didn't recognize Selina until she was in front of me
Una vez que estuvo mar adentro encendió el Evinrude (EM, Mex.)	Once he was out at sea he started up the Evinrude (outboard motor)
La conversación se fue espaciando (*ir* + gerund indicates a longish process; *fue* shows it ended)	The conversation gradually petered out

17.4.5 Use of the preterite to indicate an event that actually happened

The preterite can clearly indicate that an event happened whereas the imperfect does not give us this information. 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' (no information whether we did or not). This construction is common with *ser* and with modal verbs like *poder*, *querer*, *tener que*, for which see Chapter 25. Further examples:

Fue un error decírselo	It was a mistake to tell him/her (we committed it)
Era un error decírselo	It was a mistake to tell him/her (we may or may not have committed it)
Fue una presa fácil	(S)he/It was an easy prey (and was caught)
Era una presa fácil	(same translation, but the victim may have escaped)
Costó trabajo conseguirlo	It was hard work getting it (but we did)
Costaba trabajo conseguirlo	It was hard work to get it (we may or may not have tried to get it)
El tren llegó a las ocho	The train arrived at eight
El tren llegaba a las ocho	The train was due at eight (but may or may not have arrived then)

(1) For this reason **fue un error devolverle el dinero, por eso no lo hice* has the absurd meaning 'I made the mistake of giving him back the money, so I didn't'; . . . *era un error* . . . must be used.

17.4.6 Preterite to denote a rapid or short-lived event

The preterite can sometimes show that an event lasted only a moment. The imperfect would, in these cases, indicate an event that had not yet ended at the time referred to:

Hubo una nota de alarma en su voz	There was a (brief) note of alarm in his/her voice
Cuando abrí el horno, sentí una ráfaga de calor	When I opened the oven I felt a gust of heat
Estuvo a punto de pensar que esas manos no eran suyas (CF, Mex.)	(For a moment) he was on the verge of thinking that those hands weren't his own

17.4.7 Preterite used to indicate the beginning of a state or action

The preterite may indicate the beginning of an action. Compare *mi hija anduvo a los once meses* (i.e. *empezó a andar*) 'my daughter started walking *at* eleven months', and *mi hija andaba a los once meses* 'my daughter was walking *by* eleven months'. Also:

Me cayó bien (cf. *me caía bien* 'I was getting on well with him/her')	I took a liking to her/him
Rosa me gustó desde el primer momento	I liked ('took a liking to') Rosa right from the first moment
Fue niña y le pusimos Rita (M. Rodoreda, Castilian translation, Sp.)	It was a girl and we named her Rita
Todo lo que había dentro me pareció lejano y ajeno (LS, Ch.)	Everything inside (suddenly) seemed to me distant and alien
. . . desde 1957, cuando por primera vez estuve consciente de la Revolución Cubana (interview, *Granma*, Cu., Sp. *fui consciente*)	. . . since 1957, when I first became aware of the Cuban Revolution . . .

17.4.8 Preterite used to indicate certainties in the future

The preterite is occasionally used in set phrases in Spain to indicate an absolute certainty in the future:

Cuando llegue, llegó	(S)he'll be here when (s)he's here (and that's that!)
Cuando se acabe, se acabó	When it's finished, it's finished

(1) This construction is more common in Latin America. The following three examples are not heard in Spain:

Para las dos ya lo acabé (Mex., from Lope Blanch, 1991; Sp. *ya lo tendré/ habré acabado*)	I'll have it finished by two o'clock
Mañana ya llegó el día (LRS, PR, dialogue Sp. *mañana es el día*)	Tomorrow's the day!
Nos fuimos (colloquial Lat. Am., Sp. *nos vamos*)	We're going/We're leaving right now (lit. 'we're gone')

17.4.9 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 modal auxiliary verbs *deber*, *poder*, *querer*, *saber*, discussed in Chapter 25. Two other verbs affected are:

(**a**) *Tener*: the preterite may mean 'to receive'/'to get', the imperfect means 'had' in the sense of 'was in my/your, etc., possession':

tuve la impresión de que . . .	I got the impression that . . .
tenía la impresión de que . . .	I had the impression that . . .
Tuve una carta/Tenía una carta	I received a letter/I had a letter
Cuando tuvo ocasión de estudiar consiguió con la universidad a distancia el título de ingeniero	When (s)he got the chance to study, (s)he graduated as an engineer from the Open University

This does not override the rule given at 17.4.2 that the preterite must be used for actions continuing throughout a finite period: *tuvo fiebre durante tres días* '(s)he had a fever for three days'.

(**b**) *Conocer*: *Alejo conoció a Rafael* 'Alejo met Rafael' (for the first time), *Alejo conocía a Rafael* 'Alejo knew Rafael'.

17.4.10 Preterite used to distinguish events from descriptive background

The preterite is sometimes used to show that an event is a part of a story while the imperfect shows that it is descriptive background. This is clear for English-speakers in a sentence like *tuvieron tres niños* 'they had (i.e. "produced"/"gave birth to") three children', which is usually three separate events, and *tenían tres niños*, which is a state of affairs, not an event. Less obvious is the difference between *querían hacerlo* 'they wanted to do it', which is a state of mind, and *quisieron hacerlo*, which is an event with an outcome, i.e. they wanted to do it *and tried to*, successfully or not.

In the following example, the preterite (in bold type) presents the publication of the statistics as events while the imperfect paints the background:

*En noviembre se **registraron** 85 320 contratos, de los cuales 83 419 **fueron** indefinidos. Es decir, las colocaciones han caído significativamente respecto a la cifra récord del pasado octubre, que **fue** de más de un millón. El paro ha caído en 157 444 personas desde noviembre de 1996, cuando la tasa de paro era del 14,04%*	85,320 job contracts were registered in November, of which 83,419 were long-term. In other words, the number of persons hired has fallen significantly compared with last October's record figure, which was more than a million. Unemployment has fallen by 157,444 persons since November 1996, when the unemployment rate stood at 17.04%

(1) English speakers find this distinction confusing when the verb is *ser*. María Luz Gutiérrez Araus (1995, 32), cites an interesting example from García Márquez (Col.): *un perro . . . mordió a cuatro personas que se le atravesaron en el camino. Tres eran esclavos negros. La otra fue Sierva María* 'a dog bit four people who got in its way. Three were black slaves. The other was Sierva María'. The preterite brings Sierva María into the foreground – she is a major character in the novel. The imperfect pushes the other three characters into the descriptive background. But such clear-cut examples are rare and literary: in ordinary language one would say . . . *era Sierva María*.

17.5 The imperfect: general

The Spanish imperfect form indicates a past event or state viewed as continuing at the time referred to. Compare *M. estaba en el ejército* 'M. was in the army' (at the time: imperfect) and *M. estuvo en el ejército* 'M. was in the army' (i.e. for a time in the past: preterite). It is therefore much used to describe something that was already in progress when something else happened (17.5.1), and to express habitual events in the past (17.5.2), although the preterite can also sometimes describe habitual events, as explained at 17.4.3.

In colloquial language the Spanish imperfect may be a substitute for the conditional. See 17.5.4 and 29.5 for a discussion.

The following remarks should be read in conjunction with the comments on the preterite tense in Section 17.4.

17.5.1 Imperfect tense to denote past events and states already in progress when something else happened

The imperfect is used for background descriptions; the preterite is used for the events set against the background (imperfects in bold type):

*Yo **volvía** del cine cuando vi a Niso*	I was coming back from the cinema when I saw Niso
*Miró por encima del hombro para estar segura de que nadie la **acechaba*** (GGM, Col.)	She looked over her shoulder to be sure that no one was lying in wait for her
*Cuando entré en el cuarto noté que **olía** a quemado*	When I entered the room I noticed there was a smell of burning
*Volví a la sala, pero él ya no **estaba*** (AM, Mex., dialogue)	I went back to the living room, but he was no longer there

(1) For the possible use of the continuous imperfect in some of these sentences, e.g. *estaba acechando*, instead of the non-continuous imperfect, see 19.2.1b.

17.5.2 Imperfect used to denote events that continued in the past for an unspecified period

The imperfect can indicate that an event continued in the past for an unspecified period (and may or may not have continued). It is thus much used to describe characteristics, situations, habitual actions and other events that had no clear beginning and end:

Los griegos adoraban a muchos dioses	The Greeks worshipped many gods
Cada vez que os veíais lo decía (IA, Sp. dialogue)	He used to say it every time you met
Le exasperaban estas comidas mexicanas de cuatro o cinco horas de duración (CF, Mex.)	These four or five-hour Mexican lunches exasperated him
A veces le dolían el aire y la tierra que pisaba, el sol del amanecer, las cuencas de los ojos (AM, Mex.)	Sometimes the air and the ground she trod on hurt her, the morning sun, the sockets of her eyes

(1) But the preterite must be used if a period of time is specified, as in 'she was (*fue*) president for four years'; see 17.4.2.

17.5.3 Imperfect in sentences like 'I hadn't seen her for years', 'it was the first time that . . .'

English-speakers should note the use of the imperfect in the following type of sentence where English uses the pluperfect tense (for the tenses used in sentences of this type see 17.3.9):

Hacía tres años que no se veían (AM, Mex.)	They hadn't seen one another for three years
Era la primera vez que la veía	It was the first time I had seen her
Me venía siguiendo desde hacía una semana	S(he) had been following me for a week

17.5.4 Imperfect for the conditional

The imperfect is often used in familiar speech instead of the conditional. This most commonly occurs in four cases:

(**a**) When the conditional would refer to an immediate future. In this case Spanish resembles English: one can say 'he said he would come' or 'he said he was coming':

Prometieron que venían/vendrían	They promised they were coming/would come
Juró que lo hacía/haría	(S)he swore (s)he'd do it
Pensaba que ya no venías/vendrías	I thought you weren't coming/ wouldn't come any more
Sabíamos que los refuerzos llegaban/llegarían de un momento para otro (see note 1)	We knew the reinforcements were arriving/would arrive at any moment

(b) With *deber* and *poder*, in which case the imperfect is slightly more colloquial:

Podía ser una solución, mira . . . (CMG, Sp., dialogue; or podría)	It could be a solution, you know . . .
Debías/Deberías hacerlo ahora (see note 2)	You should do it now

(c) In conditional sentences in familiar Spanish (see 29.5 for details, and see note 3):

Incluso si no tuvieras dinero, me casaba/casaría contigo	I'd marry you even if you had no money
Yo que tú compraba una nueva (ES, Mex., dialogue)	If I were you I'd buy a new one

(d) In familiar Spanish, to express a wish or denial:

Ya le decía yo cuatro verdades	I wouldn't mind giving him/her a piece of my mind! (lit. 'telling him/her four truths')
Tenían que hacer un monumento al tío que inventó el café* (MD, Sp., dialogue)	They ought to build a monument for the guy who invented coffee
Yo ahora me tomaba un helado y me quedaba tan bien	I'd like to have an ice-cream now and I'd feel great
. . . ni loca me casaba con un español (ES, Mex., dialogue)	I wouldn't marry a Spaniard even if I were crazy (Mexican woman speaking)
A primera vista, el hombre no mataba una mosca	At first sight the man wouldn't kill a fly

**Tío*, which properly means 'uncle', is constantly used in popular language in Spain for 'guy', though many people consider it vulgar. The female equivalent is *tía*.

(1) This is not possible if the future is not immediate: *juró que me amaría siempre* (not *amaba . . .*) '(s)he swore (s)he would love me for ever'.

(2) This 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 25.2.3 and 25.3.3 for details.

(3) The imperfect cannot replace the conditional when the latter indicates a guess or estimate, as explained at 17.7.2.

17.5.5 *Hablaba* or *estaba hablando*?

If the action 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 often blurred: *yo*

hablaba/estaba hablando con los vecinos cuando llegaron los bomberos (*estaba hablando* preferred) 'I was talking to the neighbours when the firemen arrived'. See Chapter 19 for more on the continuous.

However, the verbs *ir* and *venir* and a few others are not much used in the continuous form: see 19.3c.

17.5.6 Imperfect in children's language

An interesting use of the imperfect called the *imperfecto lúdico* or 'imperfect of play' 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'.

17.5.7 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 to talk to the manager

17.5.8 Imperfect used for preterite in literary styles

In newspaper language, the imperfect is sometimes used as an alternative to the preterite for dramatic effect. Normally, the sentence includes an adverb of time that shows that the action is a single completed event:

Poco después, la policía francesa arrestaba a DM, de 56 años (*El País*, Sp.)	Shortly after, the French police arrested 56-year-old DM
Un día antes, en Santiago de Cuba, era asesinado Frank País (*Granma*, Cu.)	The day before, in Santiago de Cuba, Frank País was murdered

(1) *Arrestó* and *fue* would have been more normal in both of these examples. This construction, called *el imperfecto dramático*, is also found in literary French.

17.6 Future tense: general

Spanish, like English, 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 17.6.5:

(a) *Esta noche vamos al cine*	Tonight we're going to the cinema
(**b**) *Esta noche vamos a ir al cine*	Tonight we're going to go to the cinema
(**c**) *Esta noche iremos al cine*	Tonight we'll go to the cinema
(**d**) *Esta noche hemos de ir al cine*	Tonight we're due to go to the cinema

(a) describes an event which is prearranged or scheduled;

(**b**) is a foreseen or 'intentional' future and it is also often an informal substitute for the future-tense proper *iremos*, *seré*, etc.;

(**c**) often excludes the idea of pre-arrangement or a scheduled event. Consequently it may sound rather uncertain or, depending on tone and context, may sound like an order or a promise;

(**d**) is discussed at 25.4.1. It is sometimes heard in Latin America with a future meaning, but in Castilian-speaking areas of Spain it usually implies obligation and is now slightly old-fashioned, rather like the English 'tonight we are to go to the cinema'. It is common in Mexico as an alternative to *deber de*; see 25.4.1b.

17.6.1 Uses of the future-tense form to denote future time

Often, 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, e.g. for forecasts, or for statements where context does not make it clear that the future is meant:

Si llueve se aplazará el partido	If it rains the match will be postponed
En el remoto futuro el sol se apagará	In the remote future the sun will go out
Para entonces todos estaremos calvos	We'll all be bald by then (said of something that will take a long time)
Me ha dado cien euros. Con esto tiraré hasta la semana próxima, y luego veremos (*luego vemos* is impossible here)	(S)he gave me 100 euros. I'll manage with that until next week. Then we'll see
Nos veremos mañana en Palacio, ¿no es cierto? (CF, Mex., dialogue. *Nos vemos* would imply more certainty)	We'll see one another tomorrow at the Presidential Palace won't we?'

(b) The future is much used for promises or predictions, especially long-term ones, since these by nature are not pre-arrangements:

Ten confianza en mí. No te decepcionaré	Trust me. I won't disappoint you
¡No pasarán!	They shall not pass!
No tenga miedo . . . ya nadie le hará daño (EM, Mex., dialogue)	Don't be afraid . . . no one is going to hurt you any more
Pero cuídalo como si fuera ya mío, porque en ese caso algún día será de mis hijas (ABE, Pe., dialogue)	But look after it as though it already belonged to me, because in that case one day it will belong to my daughters
Una verdadera revolución no admitirá jamás la impunidad (*VdC*, Cu.)	A true revolution will never allow crimes to go unpunished

(1) The difference between sentences like *te veo mañana* and *te veré mañana* 'I'll see you tomorrow' may be merely one of tone. Some informants claimed they would use the present tense in ***te*** *veo mañana* (informal) and the future in ***lo/le*** *veré (a usted) mañana* (formal).

(2) For the tense form used after words meaning 'perhaps'/'probably'/'possibly' see 20.2.1.

(3) The present tense can be used colloquially (but not with *ser* 'to be') for short-term promises presented as pre-arrangements, e.g. *no te preocupes, te lo devuelvo* (or *devolveré*) *mañana* 'don't worry, I'll give it back to you tomorrow', *bueno, te llamo* 'OK, I'll call you'.

17.6.2 Future tense used for commands

As in English, the future is occasionally used for stern commands:

No matarás	Thou shalt not kill
No saldrás de esta casa hasta que yo no te lo permita (see 27.2.4c for the second *no*)	You will not leave this house until I allow you to

17.6.3 Present tense with future meaning

The present tense is much used in informal language to refer to the future. If the subject is human this conveys an idea of pre-arrangement and is therefore especially used for fixtures or scheduled events, cf. English 'I'm going to Spain next year', 'we attack tomorrow'. If the subject is non-living, the action is foreseen as a certainty or a fixture, e.g. *el tren sale mañana a las 7* 'the train leaves tomorrow at 7' (scheduled departure). Compare *mañana el tren saldrá a las siete* 'tomorrow the train will leave at seven', which suggests an unscheduled or unexpected 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*. The following examples are informal in tone:

Vamos a Bolivia el año que viene	We're going to Bolivia next year
Te llamo/Nos vemos	I'll call you/See you later
Esta noche hay tormenta, verás	Tonight there'll be a storm, you'll see
El día menos pensado le tiran a tu madre la casa (CMG, Sp., dialogue)	One fine day (lit. 'the day least expected') they're going to demolish your mother's house
Ahorita vengo, voy por el dinero (ES, Mex., dialogue. In Spain *ahorita = ahora mismo*)	I'll be right back. I'll go and get the money

(1) This use of the present tense is particularly common with verbs of motion like *ir*, *venir*, *salir*, *llegar*.

(2) Events predicted 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'.

(3) If there is nothing in the sentence or 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* plus an 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'.

(4) The present tense of *ser* is usually used for the future only in calendar statements: *mañana es jueves/fiesta* 'tomorrow is Thursday/a fiesta', but *mañana el discurso será pronunciado por el presidente* 'tomorrow the speech will be delivered by the president', not **es pronunciado*.

17.6.4 *Ir a* . . . + infinitive

The future is very often expressed by *ir a* + the infinitive. This may express firm intention or it may simply be a colloquial alternative for the future tense – but not for the suppositional future mentioned at 17.6.5: *espéreme tantito, voy a ver quién toca* . . . (ES, Mex., dialogue. *Tantito = un momentito* in Spain) 'hang on a moment, I'll go and see who's knocking on the door'.

Ir a . . . virtually replaces the ordinary future-tense form in the speech of many people. Kany, 192, gives several Latin-American examples like *ya va usted a querer pelear con nosotros por semejante porquería* (Pe., popular; Spain *se va usted a pelear con nosotros por* . . .) 'sure, you'll want to fight us over a bit of rubbish like this', *¿cuánto va a querer, señor*? (Mex., popular; Sp. *¿cuánto va a ser?/¿cuánto quiere?*) 'how much will you want, Sir?'. But the future tense is by no means extinct in speech, as can be seen in this passage of colloquial Cuban:

—*¿Y qué harás entre estas cuatro paredes? —Limpiaré el cuarto, me lavaré la cabeza, plancharé una blusita para ir al trabajo el lunes, me sentaré en la butaca, sacaré un crucigrama, me asomaré al balcón, cocinaré, me comeré las uñas. ¡No tengo ni un solo minuto libre!* (AA, Cu., dialogue; Sp. *haré un crucigrama*)	'And what'll you do (shut up) between these four walls?' 'I'll clean my room, wash my hair, iron a blouse for work on Monday, sit in the armchair, do a crossword, look out of the window, cook, chew my nails . . . I don't have a single minute free!'

(1) The imperfect *iba a*, etc. may also be used as a future in the past. See 17.7.3.

(2) Omission of the *a*, e.g. *va llamarla* '(s)he's going to call her', is heard in familiar Latin-American speech but should be avoided.

17.6.5 Future tense used for guesses and approximations

Important: one use of the future tense is to express guesses or approximations. This use of the future often produces much more idiomatic Spanish than sentences involving *aproximadamente* or *alrededor de*. In questions, the future expresses wonder, incredulity or conjecture:

Serán las nueve y media, por ahí (CMG, Sp., dialogue)	It must be around 9.30
Ya habrás comido, ¿no?	I guess you've already eaten, haven't you?
Un par de años hará . . . Gannon me escribió de Gualeguaychu (JLB, Arg.)	It must be a couple of years ago that Gannon wrote to me from Gualeguaychu
Pase usted, por favor. Siéntese. Estará cansado (JJM, Pan., dialogue)	Please come in. Sit down. You must be tired
—*¿Dónde está tu monedero? —Me lo habré dejado en casa*	'Where's your purse?' 'I must have left it at home'
¿Qué hora será? (Lat. Am.*¿Qué horas serán?*)	I wonder what the time is?
Eh, no querrás que mi jefe vea eso (JM, Sp., dialogue)	Hey, you don't want my boss to see that, do you?
¿Qué estará pensando de todo esto? (CF, Mex., dialogue)	'What *can* he be thinking of all this?'

(1) Kany, 190, notes that this use of the future is more common in Spain than in Latin America, where *deber* (*de*) . . . is more usual: *deben* (*de*) *ser las cinco* = *serán las cinco* or *deben* (*de*) *ser las cinco*. See 25.3.2 for *deber de*, which is also used in Spain. The *NGLE* 23.14s notes the suppositional use of *ir a* in Latin-American Spanish: *¿qué irá a ocurrir cuando pasen los años?* (Sp. *ocurrirá*) 'what will happen when years have gone by?'

(2) For the use of the future perfect tense for conjectures, e.g. *¿cuánto habrán pagado?* 'I wonder how much they paid?', see 18.6a.

17.6.6 Two cases where the future tense is *not* used

(a) As in English, the future tense is not used after 'if'/*si*: **si vendrás mañana*/*'if you will come tomorrow' is incorrect in both languages for *si vienes mañana*/'if you come tomorrow'. An exception to this rule is mentioned at 29.8.1 note 3. This does not apply to the emphatic use of *si* described at 35.4.8: *¡si será tonto!* 'wow, is he stupid!'

(b) Students must avoid using the future after *cuando* in sentences like *comeremos cuando llegue Julia* (present subjunctive) 'we'll eat when Julia arrives', not **cuando llegará Julia*'. Learners who know French or Italian are likely to succumb to this temptation. See 20.4.7 for more details.

17.7 The conditional: general

For the forms of the conditional see 16.3 and 16.7.4.

The name 'conditional' is accurate insofar as it often shows that an event is conditional 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 (17.7.2) and the expression of the future in the past (17.7.3).

(1) Important: 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' (see 20.8 for detailed discussion).

(2) Colloquial language may use the imperfect instead of the conditional especially in conditional sentences (see 17.5.4 and 29.5 for discussion).

(3) For replacement of the imperfect subjunctive by the conditional in some regions, e.g. ?*si yo tendría dinero* for *si yo tuviera dinero* 'if I had some money' see 20.12.2.

17.7.1 Uses of the conditional to express conditions

The conditional is also used for implied conditions, i.e. conditional statements which contain no if-clause:

Sería una locura ponerlo en marcha sin aceite	It would be crazy to start it up with no oil
Lo único que no tendría en su despacho sería una cocina (GZ, Mex., dialogue)	The only thing he wouldn't have in his office would be a cooking stove

(1) For the conditional in conditional sentences, e.g. *si hiciera menos frío iríamos a la playa* 'if it were less cold we'd go to the beach' see Chapter 29.

17.7.2 Conditional tense used for suppositions or guesses about the past

The conditional is used for guesses and approximations about the past in the same way as the future is for guesses about the present or future (see 17.6.5):

Serían alrededor de las seis de la mañana (EM, Mex.)	It must have been about six in the morning
Tendría (or *tenía/debía de tener*) *unos treinta años*	(S)he must have been about thirty
Los guardé algún tiempo . . . luego supongo que los quemaría (CMG, Sp., dialogue)	I kept them (*los diarios* –'the diaries') for a while . . . then I must have burnt them

Gregorius habría nacido en Glasgow (JC, Arg.)	Gregorius was reportedly born in Glasgow
un fósil de molusco o gasterópodo —tipo caracol— que pertenecería a la época del Cuaternario	a fossil of a mollusc or gastropod – of the snail type – that probably belonged to the Quaternary period

(1) In newspapers, more so in Latin America than in Spain, the conditional is used for rumours or unsubstantiated reports. This construction is condemned by many grammarians and by the editors of *El País*, but the Academy now accepts it:

Ese dinero . . . sería resultado del esquema de sobornos y desvíos (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	That money is said to be a result of the scheme of bribes and illicit payments
La desaparición de los etarras estaría motivada por cuestiones de seguridad (*Abc*, Sp.)	Security reasons are said to be the motive for the disappearance of the ETA members (*ETA*: a now defunct Basque separatist movement)

(2) For the use of *deber de* for suppositions see 25.3.2.

(3) In questions, the conditional perfect may express amazement or anxiety. See 18.6b.

17.7.3 Conditional for the future in the past

As in English, the conditional is used to express the future in the past, i.e. as a close equivalent of *iba a* + an infinitive:

Yo sabía que papá bajaría/iba a bajar a las once	I knew father would come down at 11 o'clock
Cerró la puerta con cuidado; su mujer dormía profundamente. Dormiría hasta que el sol hiciera su primera presencia en la ventana (IA, Sp.)	He shut the door carefully; his wife was fast asleep. She would sleep until the sun first showed at the window
En un rato todo el mundo se iría a dormir la siesta (AM, Mex., dialogue; Sp. *Dentro de un rato*)	Soon everyone would go and take a siesta

(1) When the conditional refers to an event known to have taken place – which it does not in the preceding three examples – the effect is literary: *el treinta de abril de aquel año Hitler se suicidaría en su búnker* 'on April 30 of that year Hitler was to/would commit suicide in his bunker', *andando el tiempo ostentaría varias carteras ministeriales* (JC, Sp.) 'in due time he would hold several ministerial appointments'.

17.7.4 Conditional in rhetorical questions

As in English, the conditional is much used for questions to which the speaker already knows the answer:

¿Hay alguien que se atrevería a ir a un estadio o auditorio para ver a una chica virtual cantando? (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	Is there anyone who'd bother (lit. 'dare') to go to a stadium or concert hall to see a 'virtual' girl singing?

17.7.5 Replacement of the pluperfect conditional tense by pluperfect subjunctive tense

The pluperfect subjunctive verb form (*hubiera sido*, *hubieran visto*, etc.) is quite often used as an alternative to the conditional perfect, *habría sido*, *habrían visto*. This is possible only when the verb is truly a conditional in the past and not a suppositional form (17.7.2) or a future in the past (17.7.3). This use of the pluperfect subjunctive form is slightly more formal or bookish in tone and, according to the Academy, is more common in Latin America than in Spain:

Hubiera podido ser una buena novela de misterio . . . (CMG, Sp., dialogue)	It could have been a good mystery novel
El mal lo mismo se hubiera colado por alguna grieta de las piedras del castillo (MP, Arg., dialogue)	The disease would have crept in just the same through some crack in the walls of the castle
A lo mejor me hubiera hecho mucho bien seguir con la terapia (AM, Mex.)	Perhaps it would have done me a lot of good to continue with therapy

Habría could have been used for *hubiera* in all these examples.

(1) Use of the *-se* subjunctive form instead of the *-ra* form of *haber* to form the pluperfect conditional is rejected by the grammarians: *El País*'s *Libro de estilo* 2014, 13.27, bans it and the *NGLE* 23.15v and 24.2c disapproves. The *-ra* form is overwhelmingly more usual, but the *-se* form is nevertheless found, especially in Mexico and Spain: *cualquiera hubiese creído que de verdad estaba excitada* (ES, Mex., for *hubiera/habría creído*) 'anyone would have believed she was really excited', *Eva adoraba las fiestas; le hubiese encantado acompañarle a la ópera* (RM, Spain) 'Eva [Perón] loved parties; she would have been thrilled to accompany him to the opera', *y* ***hubiese*** *sido muy sospechoso que yo me negase* (MP, Arg., dialogue) 'and it would have been very suspicious if I'd refused'.

17.7.6 Use of the *-ra* imperfect subjunctive form for the conditional tense

(a) With *querer* and *deber*, the imperfect subjunctive form may be used instead of the conditional, as in *yo querría/quisiera hacerlo* 'I'd like to do it', *deberías/debieras haberlo hecho* 'you should have done it'. The subjunctive form is more formal. With *poder*, use of the imperfect subjunctive is literary: *en un país que bien pudiera ser Chile* (*CORPES*, Ch.) 'in a country that might/could well be Chile'. See Chapter 25 for a further discussion of these modal verbs.

(b) With other verbs, use of the imperfect subjunctive for the conditional is nowadays uncommon and archaic: *Abril, sin tu asistencia clara, fuera invierno de caídos esplendores . . .* (Juan Ramón Jiménez, poetry; 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 JC, Sp.) 'a book would be little (lit. 'were little . . .') to do justice to (lit. 'to give channel to') a land like La Mancha'.

(1) The imperfect subjunctive used for the conditional tense is found in the Latin-American literary formula *pareciera que . . .* (for *parecería que . . .*) 'it would seem that . . .': *pareciera que sabes un poco de todo lo que comentamos* (MC, Mex., dialogue) 'it would seem that you know a bit about everything we mention'. Such use of the *-ra* subjunctive is rather more common in spontaneous speech in Venezuela and Central America where one hears sentences like *en ese caso yo lo hiciera* for . . . *lo haría* 'in that case I would do it'.

(2) In pre-eighteenth-century Spanish, the use of the *-ra* form for the conditional tense with all verbs was very common: *y si estas calamidades no me acontecieran, no me* ***tuviera*** (modern Spanish *tendría*) *yo por caballero andante* (*Don Quijote*) 'and had these calamities not befallen me, I would not consider myself a knight errant'. Compare the archaic English equivalent '. . . I had not considered myself a knight errant'.

17.8 Tense agreement

Tense agreement with the subjunctive is discussed in full at 20.8.

As far as the indicative tenses are concerned, Spanish is stricter than English about the agreement of past with past. In sentences like 'John said he is/was coming', English seems to use either tense in the subordinate clause. Spanish requires *Juan dijo que* ***venía***. Sentences like ?*Juan dijo que viene* usually sound careless or sub-standard. The present is, however, possible with the perfect tense when John's arrival is still awaited: *Juan ha dicho que viene* 'Juan said he's coming'.

18 Use of indicative (non-continuous) compound tenses

The following topics are discussed in this chapter:

- General remarks on the compound tenses (Section 18.1)
- Uses of the perfect tense (*he hablado*, *hemos ido*, etc.) (Section 18.2)
- Uses of the pluperfect tense (*había hablado*, *habían ido,* etc.) (Section 18.3)
- The *-ra* pluperfect (Section 18.3.2)
- The *pretérito anterior*: *hubo terminado*, etc. (Section 18.4)
- The pluperfect subjunctive (*hubiera/hubiese hablado*, etc.) (Section 18.5)
- The future perfect and conditional perfect: *habrá hecho*, *habría hecho*, etc. (Section 18.6)

18.1 Compound tenses: general remarks

Compound tenses are tenses formed from *haber* plus the past participle. See 16.13 for the conjugation of the compound tenses of a typical verb.

All of the tenses, except the *pretérito anterior*, can also appear in the continuous form: see Chapter 19:

Perfect	*he estado hablando, etc.*	I've been speaking
Pluperfect	*había estado hablando, etc.*	I had been speaking
Future perfect	*habré estado hablando, etc.*	I will have been speaking
Conditional perfect	*habría estado hablando, etc.*	I would have been speaking
Perfect subjunctive	*haya estado hablando, etc.*	No exact translation
Pluperfect subjunctive	*hubiera/hubiese estado hablando, etc.*	No exact translation

(1) Important: compound tenses all use the auxiliary *haber* or, much less commonly and the *pretérito anterior* excepted, *tener* (see 18.1.3). French, Italian and German form the compound tenses of certain verbs with 'to be' as the auxiliary: *je suis allé/allée, sono andato/andata*, *ich bin gegangen*. Verbs in modern Spanish form compound tenses only with *haber*. *Llegar*, *ir* and *venir* are very rare archaic or journalistic exceptions, cf. *el verano es ido* 'Summer is gone', normally *se ha ido*.

(2) Unlike French and Italian, the past participle is invariable in form. Compare French *je l'ai vu**e*** 'I saw **her**' and Spanish *la he vist**o***. This does not apply if *tener* is used instead of *haber*: see 18.1.3.

18.1.1 Compound tenses: word order

Important: no words should be inserted between *haber* and the past participle: compare French *j'ai toujours dit* and *siempre he dicho*. *He siempre dicho* is not heard in normal Spanish, but the 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*:

Se habrá tal vez olvidado	You may have forgotten
Se ha más que duplicado la cifra	The figure has more than doubled

. . . en buena parte por no habérselo aún propuesto con entera seriedad (SP, Mex.)	. . . to a great extent because he had not yet suggested it to him in all seriousness

(1) Important: when *haber* is in the infinitive or the gerund form, personal pronouns are attached to it: . . . *antes de habérselo propuesto* '. . . before suggesting it to him/her/you', *habiéndonoslos enviado* 'having sent them to us'. **Me arrepiento de te lo haber dicho* is not Spanish for 'I regret having said it to you', correctly *me arrepiento de habértelo dicho*.

(2) For the now obsolete construction *había comprado la casa y pintádola* for *había comprado la casa y la había pintado* '(s)he had bought the house and painted it', see 14.3.7 note 2.

18.1.2 Omission of *haber* and of the past participle in compound tenses

The auxiliary verb *haber* may optionally be omitted before a second or subsequent past participle to avoid repetition:

Yo también he pasado por baches y conocido la duda (LG, Sp., dialogue)	I've been through rough patches as well and known doubt
No sólo había tocado la mano y mirado los ojos de la mujer que más le gustaba tocar y mirar del mundo . . . (CF, Mex.)	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 . . .

(1) The past 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*, but not **sí, las he*. However, deletion occasionally occurs with the pluperfect tense: *¿se había reído? Sí, se había. Pero esta vez sin sarcasmo* (MVLl, Pe., dialogue) 'Had he laughed? Yes, he had. But without sarcasm this time'.

18.1.3 *Tengo hecho, tengo comprado*, etc.

Tener can be 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 *he hecho mis deberes* 'I've done my homework' and *tengo hecho**s** mis deberes* 'I've got my homework done'. The participle must agree in number and gender with the object of the verb, and the verb must be transitive and have a direct object (**tengo sido* for *he sido* 'I have been', Portuguese *tenho sido*, is not Spanish):

*Ya tengo compra**das** las entradas*	I've already bought the tickets
Yo tenía concertada hora con el jefe	I had arranged an appointment with the boss
Que persigan a los pillos que tienen tomadas las calles (*El Tiempo*, Col.)	Let them chase after the hoodlums that have taken over the streets
Tenía pensado cruzar a la orilla derecha (JC, Arg., dialogue)	I had planned to cross to the right bank [of the Seine]
Los cuicos tenían rodeado el coche (CF, Mex. *Cuico* is Mexican slang)	The cops had the car surrounded

(1) *Llevar* is also occasionally used in the same way: *llevo tomadas tres aspirinas, pero todavía me duele la cabeza* 'I've taken three aspirins, but my head's still aching', *. . . y le llevan encontradas ya creo que hasta tres calaveras en la catedral de Lima* (ABE, Pe., dialogue; Sp. *y llevan encontradas . . .*) 'I think they've already found three of his skulls in Lima Cathedral' (refers to a famous saint), *yo llevo vendidos cuatrocientos* (Mexico City, overheard) 'I've sold four hundred', *llevo veintiún asesinatos investigados. Una sola mujer* (LS, Sp., dialogue) 'I've investigated twenty-one murders. Only one [murderer] was a woman.'

(2) In Galicia one sometimes hears sentences like **no la tengo visto*. This is not Castilian but a borrowing from the Galician *non a teño visto*. It should be *no la he visto*.

18.2 The perfect indicative tense

Spanish differs from spoken French, German and Italian, and broadly resembles English, in respecting the difference between *hablé* 'I spoke', and *he hablado* 'I've spoken'. Students of languages in which the difference is blurred must not imitate sentences like *je l'ai vu hier*, *ich habe ihn gestern gesehen*, *l'ho visto ieri* 'I saw him yesterday' to produce questionable Spanish like **lo/le he visto ayer*, correctly *lo/le vi ayer.*

European Spanish usually uses the perfect wherever English does, but the converse is not true: the European Spanish perfect often requires translation by the English simple past. Moreover, in most of the Spanish-speaking world (Galicia, Asturias, the Canaries and most of Latin America) the preterite is in fact more common than the perfect, cf. *ya llegó* (Latin America) '(s)he has already arrived' (some varieties of American English are like Latin-American Spanish in preferring the simple past to the compound perfect: '(s)he already arrived', British '(s)he's already arrived'). In Spain one says *ya ha llegado*.

Use of the perfect tense seems to be most developed in Madrid and is noticed by persons from other regions. A. Moreira Rodríguez, one of the authors of this book, recalls an eight-year-old girl from Galicia rebuking her little cousin from Madrid: *¡siempre dices "he corrido", "he visto", "he ido". Hablas mal. Hay que decir "corrí", "vi", "fui"!*

(1) Important: the English perfect tense is ambiguous: 'I've lived in London for ten years' can mean either that you no longer live there or that you still live there. Out of context, *he vivido diez años en Londres* is assumed to mean that you no longer live there. *Llevo diez años viviendo en Londres* clearly means that you still live there. This rule can be overridden by context or by words like *siempre*, cf. *aquí nací y aquí he vivido siempre* (EM, Sp., dialogue) 'I was born here and I've always lived here' (see the next section for details).

18.2.1 Perfect to denote events occurring in a period that includes the present

The perfect is used for events that have happened in a period of time that is still current, 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, and the construction is also very common in written Latin-American Spanish:

No he visto a tu madre esta semana	I haven't seen your mother this week
Hemos ido dos veces este mes	We've been twice this month
En sólo dos generaciones se ha desertizado un 43% de la superficie terrestre (*Abc*, Sp.)	In only two generations 43% of the earth's surface has been reduced to desert
Desde el año 2000 han sido asesinados en México 91 reporteros (*La Jornada*, Mex., Feb. 2016. Sp. *91 periodistas . . .*)	Since the year 2000, 91 journalists have been murdered in Mexico
Ya han llegado	They've already arrived
Siempre he pensado que . . .	I have always thought that . . .
Aún/Todavía no han llegado	They haven't arrived yet
He pensado en ti tantas veces	I've thought of you so often

(1) The preterite may be used to break 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'; there is little difference in meaning. Use of the preterite suggests either that the statement was made after midday (the most likely explanation), or that the speaker feels that the event is by now further in the past, or that the speaker comes from a region that makes less use of the perfect tense.

(2) In all the examples given, Latin Americans may prefer the preterite: see 18.2.8. But use of the perfect tense to describe a lasting life experience is more or less universal: *gané la lotería*, *así que he vivido bien* 'I won the lottery, so I've lived well'.

18.2.2 Perfect for events whose effects are still relevant in the present

As in English, the perfect is used for recent past events that are relevant to or explain the present, or whose effects persist in the present. This is also common in written Latin-American Spanish:

Alguien ha fumado un cigarrillo aquí. Huelo el humo	Someone has smoked a cigarette here. I can smell the smoke
¿Quién ha roto esta ventana?	Who's broken/Who broke this window?
Todo el mundo habla de Fulano porque ha publicado otra novela	Everyone's talking about so-and-so because he's published a new novel
Estoy orgulloso de lo que han hecho con este muchacho—, dijo —se ha convertido en un hombre (DES, Mex., dialogue)	I'm proud of what they've done with this boy,' he said. 'He's become a man'

(1) Latin-American speech (outside the regions mentioned in 18.2.3 note 1) may use the preterite in such sentences. See 18.2.8 for discussion.

(2) The perfect is sometimes used in European Spanish together with some word or phrase that refers to a past not continuing into the present, e.g. 'yesterday', 'two months ago'. This may express the idea that an event is relevant to or explains something in the present, as in *está en muy mala edad para cambiar. Ha cumplido cincuenta años en junio* (CMG, Sp., dialogue) 'he's really not the best age for changing. He was fifty last June'. Seco (1998), 357, says that this shows that the action took place in what for the speaker is the 'psychological present', but many Spaniards from the north and many Latin Americans insist on the preterite in such cases and in sentences like the following:

Pero el padre murió, y la madre ha muerto hace unos años (ABV, Sp., dialogue: makes her death more immediate)	But the father died, and the mother died a few years ago
?*Bueno, he ido a hacerme el análisis hace quince días* (Madrid interviewee. Popular style)	Anyway, I went and had the test done two weeks ago
A mí todo lo que me ha sucedido me ha sucedido ayer, anoche a más tardar (JC, Arg., dialogue)	Everything that has happened to me happened yesterday, last night at the latest

(3) De Mello (1994), 1, reports the same phenomenon in the speech of Lima and La Paz, but he finds virtually no other Latin-American examples. Bolivian Spanish is particularly likely to use the perfect tense in these contexts, as is colloquial Spanish in Madrid.

(4) The *NGLE* (23.7g) notes that the sentence *Carlos Gardel ha sido el mejor intérprete del tango* 'Carlos Gardel was the best of the tango performers' is correct because it is still true in the present. However, ?*Einstein ha visitado España en 1928* (for *visitó*) 'Einstein visited Spain in 1928' sounds odd because it no longer describes something true in the present.

18.2.3 Perfect of recency

In Spain, but rarely in Latin America outside Bolivia and Peru, 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 tense in European Spanish:

Esta mañana me he levantado/me levanté a las seis	I got up at six this morning
Han sonado hace poco dos tiros. ¿Los has oído? (ABV, Sp., dialogue)	There were two shots a moment ago. Did you hear them?
—¿Quién ha dicho eso?— No he sido yo. Ha sido él	'Who said that (just now)?' 'It wasn't me. It was him'
La he visto hace un momento	I saw her a moment ago
No he podido hacerlo	I couldn't do it
Perdone, no he entendido bien lo que ha dicho (CMG, Sp., dialogue)	Sorry, I didn't fully understand what you said (just now)

(1) The perfect of recency seems to be a fairly recent innovation of European Spanish, although Kany, 200, notes its colloquial use in Bolivia and Peru, cf. *te he hecho daño porque no has entendido nada* (ABE, Pe., dialogue) 'I hurt you because you didn't understand a thing'. Other Latin-American regions favour the preterite in these examples.

Many persons from northern Spain use the preterite in sentences like those shown above.

(2) European Spanish freely uses the perfect of recency with verbs like *querer*, *ser*: *no he querido hacerlo* 'I didn't want to do it', *¿quién ha sido el gracioso que se ha llevado las llaves?* 'who was the clown that took the keys away?'

(3) 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 seen the flash?' (assuming it is not going to be repeated): *¿habéis visto el relámpago?* 'did you see the flash?'

(4) Despite the frequency of the perfect of recency, Spanish radio announcers often end programmes with remarks like ***escucharon*** *ustedes la novena sinfonía de Beethoven* 'you have been listening to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony' (more usually *acaban de escuchar . . .*). Seco, p.357, disapproves of this use of the preterite.

18.2.4 Perfect in time phrases

The perfect is often used in Spain – at least in the Madrid region – in negative time phrases of the sort *hace años que no te he visto* (or *no te veo*; Latin Americans and Spaniards from the north-west 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 lo/le* ***veo*** *todos los días* 'I've been seeing him every day for years'. See Chapter 36, especially 36.3.2, for more on this subject.

18.2.5 Use of the perfect for famous quotations

The perfect is sometimes used for famous quotations, e.g. *Aristóteles ha dicho que . . .* 'Aristotle said that . . .'. The present, preterite or imperfect are also possible.

18.2.6 Perfect used for future certainties

The perfect is occasionally used in familiar spoken European Spanish, at least in central Spain, for future actions that are described as certainties: *cuando vuelvas ya he acabado* 'I'll have finished by the time you get back'. Formal usage requires the future perfect . . . *ya lo habré acabado.* See 17.4.8 for the Latin-American tendency to use the preterite (*ya acabé*) in similar sentences.

(1) A curiosity of colloquial Ecuadorean Spanish is the use of the perfect for future certainties: *el año que viene ha sido bisiesto* 'next year's a leap year' for . . . *es/será bisiesto*. This seems to be unknown elsewhere.

18.2.7 Perfect with future reference in conditional sentences

As in English, the perfect may refer to the future in the if-clause of a conditional sentence: *si la situación no ha cambiado para el viernes, avísame* 'if the situation hasn't changed by Friday, let me know'.

18.2.8 The perfect tense in Latin America: further remarks

In general, in formal written Spanish, the rules governing the use of perfect tense seem to be the same on both continents.

As far as spoken language is concerned, the rules for its use in central Spain also apply – with some slight differences – to the spoken language of Bolivia and Peru. In most of the rest of Latin America, however, and also in Galicia and Asturias, completed actions tend to be expressed in everyday language by the preterite tense. This solution is so favoured in informal styles in some parts of Latin America that the perfect tense is rarely heard:

Ya nos llegó la moderna solución (*El Tiempo*, Col., Sp. *ha llegado*)	Now we've got the modern answer!
—*¿Ya organizaste? —le pregunté.* —*Sí, ya organicé* (AM, Mex., dialogue; Sp. *lo has organizado/lo he organizado*)	'Have you organized it?', I asked him. 'Yes, I've organized it'
¿Nunca te fijaste en eso? (ibid., Sp. *nunca te has fijado*)	Haven't you ever noticed/Didn't you ever notice that?

(1) The perfect tense seems to be least popular in everyday speech in Buenos Aires city and is said to sound 'bookish' there: the preterite is preferred.

(2) In the spoken language of Mexico, and many other places, the perfect tense may express incomplete actions. *Estudié mucho este mes* means 'I've done a lot of studying this month' (and now I've stopped), *nos podemos ir. El maestro no vino* 'we can go. The teacher hasn't come' (and won't be coming now). But *he estudiado mucho este mes* 'I've been doing a lot of studying this month (and I still am)', *les he escrito* = 'I have been writing to them and still am', *el maestro no ha venido* 'the teacher hasn't come yet' (but he may still come).

For Spaniards *les he escrito* is a completed action: 'I wrote/have written to them'. The difference in Mexican Spanish is visible, as the *NGLE* 23.7r notes, in the polite Mexican question *¿cómo has estado?* which clearly means 'how have you been keeping?' (up to and including now) and excludes the meaning 'how were you?', which is how Spaniards understand it.

With words like *aún*, *todavía* the event can still happen, so the perfect is used as in Spain: *aún/todavía no ha llamado* '(s)he hasn't phoned yet' (but may still phone).

18.2.9 The perfect and imperfect subjunctive

In general, the perfect subjunctive, *haya dicho*, *hayamos contestado*, etc., is used where Spanish grammar requires that a perfect indicative verb must be put in the subjunctive mood: *creo que lo he visto – no creo que lo* ***haya*** *visto*. But it often seems that the perfect and imperfect subjunctives can be used interchangeably:

Es imposible que lo haya hecho/que lo hiciera/hiciese	It's impossible that (s)he did it
Niega que su mujer le abriera/abriese/le haya abierto la puerta	He denies that his wife opened the door for him/her
Algunos no aceptan que Colón descubriera/descubriese/haya descubierto América	Some people don't accept that Columbus discovered America

18.3 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* imperfect subjunctive form of the verb can also sometimes have an indicative pluperfect meaning in literary Spanish: see 18.3.2.

18.3.1 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.

Ya habían encendido las luces cuando yo llegué	They had already switched on the lights when I arrived
Sabíamos que ya había vendido el coche	We knew that (s)he had already sold the car
Los patrones estaban celebrando que habían llegado a un acuerdo (EM, Mex., dialogue)	The bosses were celebrating the fact that they had reached an agreement
Yo me había levantado, duchado y desayunado cuando sonó el teléfono (ABE, Pe.)	I had got up, showered and breakfasted when the phone rang

(1) Colloquially, especially in Latin America, the pluperfect may be expressed by the preterite or, when it refers to habitual actions, by the imperfect: *lo encontré donde lo dejé* (for . . . *donde lo había dejado*) (J. M. Lope Blanch, 1991, 152) 'I found it where I'd left it/where I left it', *le faltaban dos dientes y nunca se puso* (Sp. *se había puesto) a dieta ni fue* (Sp. *había ido/iba*) *al gimnasio* (AM, Mex., dialogue) 'he had two teeth missing and he had never been on a diet or gone to the gym', *cuando terminábamos* (for *habíamos terminado*) *volvíamos a casa* (habitual) 'when we had finished, we used to return home'.

(2) The pluperfect is occasionally used to make polite enquiries: *¿usted me había pedido otro té?* 'did you ask for another tea?'

18.3.2 Pluperfect in *-ra*

The *-ra* imperfect subjunctive form of Spanish verbs – *hablara, dijera, fuera*, etc. – descends from the Latin indicative pluperfect: the Latin *fueram* (Spanish *fuera*) meant 'I had been'. The Spanish *-ra* form gradually acquired a subjunctive meaning and for most purposes it is now identical in use to the *-se* imperfect subjunctive and is replacing it: see 20.1.3 for further details. But its old indicative pluperfect meaning survives in literature and journalism as a supposedly elegant alternative for the ordinary pluperfect with *había*. This is a common construction in Latin America, but it is also found in Spain in the media and in writers who fancy themselves as stylists. Lorenzo (1980, 135) complains that it sounds affected.

When used thus, the *-ra* form has no subjunctive meaning. However, this construction occurs only in subordinate, chiefly relative clauses: *el libro que había leído* 'the book he had read' can be recast in 'elegant' style as *el libro que leyera*, but the sentence *había leído el libro* '(s)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* (GGM, Col., for *había sido*)	It was the only trace she left in what had been her marital home for five hours
Personajes de televisión recuerdan el que fuera su juguete especial (*El Universo*, Ec.)	TV personalities recall what was their favourite toy
China investiga al que fuera su máximo responsable de seguridad (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	China investigates person who was its head of security
Parece ser además que en el solar donde se construyera el hotel se alzaba antes el palacio (AG, Sp.)	It seems, moreover, that the palace once stood on the land where the hotel had been built

Había sido, se había construido would have been equally correct in the previous examples and preferable for many people.

(1) 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* (AC, Cu., 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 rare on both continents and rather forced.

(2) Use of the *-ra* pluperfect in spoken Spanish is typical of Galicians since the *-ra* form still has an indicative pluperfect meaning in Galician (and in Portuguese).

18.3.3 *-ra* and *-se* verb forms after *después* (*de*) *que, desde que, luego* (*de*) *que*, etc.

The rule for the choice of verb form after *después* (*de*) *que*, *desde que* and *luego* (*de*) *que* 'after', and *a los pocos/dos/cinco días de que* 'a few/two/five days after' is: subjunctive for as yet unfulfilled events – *comeremos después de que lleguen los demás* 'we'll eat after the rest arrive' – and indicative for fulfilled events: *comimos después de que **llegaron** los demás* 'we ate after the rest arrived'. 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'. Further examples:

. . . después de que las hijas mayores la ayudaron a poner un poco de orden en los estragos de la boda (GGM, Col.)	. . . after the elder daughters (had) helped her to put a bit of order in the devastation left by the wedding

después de que Victoriano Huerta mató a Madero (AM, Mex., dialogue)	. . . after Victoriano Huerta killed Madero
Desde que se casó, Octavia nunca volvió a besarme (ABE, Pe. Or *después de que . . .*)	From the moment she got married, Octavia never kissed me again

However, we find the *-ra* or more rarely the *-se* verb forms frequently used even for fulfilled events in the past and even with subordinators like *desde que* 'from the moment that . . .', which usually introduces fulfilled events. This is presumably a survival of the *-ra* pluperfect discussed at 18.3.2:

. . . después de que Nigeria hiciese pública su decisión de firmar el acta (*El País*, Sp.)	. . . after Nigeria made public its decision to sign the communiqué/minutes
Vargas Llosa, que conserva muchos amigos en Barcelona desde que residiera en España (*Abc*, Sp.)	Vargas Llosa, who has kept many friends in Barcelona from when he lived in Spain
La corte frenó la ejecución luego que la Corte Suprema declarara la inconstitucionalidad del sistema de pena de muerte (*Excélsior*, Mex.)	The court suspended the execution after the Supreme Court declared the system of the death penalty unconstitutional

18.4 *Pretérito anterior*: *hube hablado, hube acabado*, etc.

This tense, which has no equivalent in English, is formed with the preterite of *haber* plus the past participle and is used to indicate that an event terminated just before another past event. It is normally confined to literature and is now extremely rare in speech:

Cuando hubieron terminado de reírse, examinaron mi situación personal (A. Cancela, quoted *Esbozo*, 3.18.7)	When they had finished laughing, they examined my personal situation
Le escribió el mismo día, no bien se hubo marchado (LG, Sp.)	He wrote to her the same day, when she had only just left
. . . así que, una vez que me hube quitado la blusa . . . (ES, Arg., dialogue)	. . . so, as soon as I had taken my blouse off
Cuando se hubo fumado el último de sus cigarros (MS, Mex.)	When he had smoked the last of his cigars (or 'cigarettes')

(1) This tense is 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 of similar meaning, to emphasize that the event was completed just before the main event in the sentence. In ordinary language it is expressed by the preterite: *tan pronto como llegamos, pasamos al comedor* 'as soon as we (had) arrived, we went through to the dining room', *pero apenas entró cambió de opinión* (JI, Mex., dialogue) 'but he'd hardly entered when he changed his mind', *apenas terminamos el almuerzo llegó Casals* (MP, Arg., dialogue) 'we'd scarcely finished lunch when Casals arrived'. It can also be replaced by the pluperfect: *apenas había ordenado el señor juez el levantamiento del cadáver para llevarlo al depósito judicial, rompieron el silencio unos gritos de mujer* (FGP, Sp.) 'the judge had scarcely ordered the removal of the body to the official morgue when the silence was broken by women shouting' (or 'a woman shouting').

(2) 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*.

(3) The French equivalent of *hube terminado* is *j'eus fini*, or in popular French *j'ai eu fini*. This tense survives in French, but the *pretérito anterior* is virtually obsolete in spoken Spanish and is not very common in written styles.

18.5 The pluperfect subjunctive

Normally this form, e.g. *hubiera hablado*, *hubiese hablado*, is used when Spanish grammar requires that a pluperfect indicative form be put in the subjunctive form. Compare *yo estaba convencido de que Raúl lo había hecho* 'I was convinced Raúl had done it' and *yo no estaba convencido de que Raúl lo hubiera/hubiese hecho* 'I wasn't convinced that Raúl had done it'.

(1) Important: students must remember that forms like *hubiera sido*, *hubiéramos contestado* may be alternative forms of the perfect conditional *habría sido*, *habría contestado*. See 17.7.5.

18.6 The future perfect and conditional perfect

The future perfect, *habré hecho* 'I will have done' and the conditional perfect *habría hecho* 'I would have done' are used in more or less the same ways as their English equivalents. But the following points are worth noting:

(**a**) the future perfect is very often used to express conjecture or, in questions, mystification or perplexity: *se lo habrá dicho Miguel* 'Miguel must have told him/her/you', *¿dónde lo habrás puesto?* 'where *can* you have put it?'

The negative expresses a conjecture or may make a statement rhetorical, i.e. it expects or hopes for the answer 'of course not': *no lo habrán hecho . . .* 'I guess they haven't done it' or 'they *can't* have done it, can they?' In questions, the negative may make a tentative suggestion: *¿no se le habrá olvidado la reunión?* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'you don't think he may have forgotten the meeting?' It may also make a question rhetorical, i.e. it expects or hopes for the answer 'no': *¿no la habrás vuelto a llamar?* 'you haven't called her again, have you?!' It may also simply suggest mystification: *¿por qué no se habrá casado?* (EM, Mex., dialogue) 'I wonder why he didn't get married'.

(**b**) the conditional pluperfect frequently occurs in conditional sentences of the type 'if I'd had enough money I would have bought it' *si hubiera tenido suficiente dinero, lo* ***habría/hubiera comprado***'. Use of the *-ra* subjunctive form of *haber* in this tense is a common alternative, as explained at 17.7.5.

The conditional pluperfect with *habría*, etc., but not with the *-ra* form of *haber*, may also express a guess or supposition about the past: *se lo habría dicho Miguel* 'Miguel must have told him/her'. In questions, it adds a note of perplexity or anxiety: *¿no se lo habría dicho Miguel?* 'it couldn't be that Miguel told her, could it?', *¿la habría oído?* (CMG, Sp., dialogue) 'could he possibly have heard her?', *en el saco no estaba, tampoco en la mesa. ¿Lo habría perdido?* (ES, Mex. *Saco = la chaqueta* in Spain) 'it [the watch] wasn't in his jacket or on the table either. Could he have lost it?'

(1) As far as we know, use of the perfect for the future perfect (i.e. to mean 'will have done something') is confined to colloquial language in Madrid and central Spain: *para mañana ya lo he acabado = . . . ya lo habré acabado* 'I'll have finished it by tomorrow'. See 17.4.8 for Latin-American alternatives.

19 Continuous forms of verbs

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- *Estoy hablando*, *están cenando*, etc., compared with English 'I'm talking', 'they're having dinner' (Section 19.1.2)
- Uses of the Spanish continuous forms (Section 19.2)
- The preterite continuous (*estuve hablando*, etc.) (Section 19.2.3)
- Restrictions on the use of the Spanish continuous (Section 19.3)
- The continuous form of *ser* (Section 19.4)
- Continuous forms in Latin-American Spanish (Section 19.5)

19.1 The continuous: general

19.1.1 Forms and equivalents of the continuous

The continuous forms of Spanish verbs are formed with the appropriate tense of *estar* 'to be' and the gerund: *estoy hablando* 'I'm talking', *estaban comiendo* 'they were eating', *estaremos escribiendo* 'we'll be writing', etc. The forms of the gerund are discussed at 24.2.

Spanish continuous forms can appear in any tense except the *pretérito anterior* (discussed at 18.4). Spanish thus differs from French, which has no continuous verb forms, and Italian, which uses the continuous only in the present and imperfect tenses.

The Spanish continuous is becoming increasingly common, which may reflect the influence of English. The Academy's *Esbozo . . .*, 3.12.5, complains about the modern over-use of the continuous. One unnecessary Anglicism is found in letters in sentences like *le estamos abonando en su cuenta la cantidad de dos mil pesos* 'we are depositing in your account the sum of 2,000 pesos' (for *le abonamos . . .*) or *en este paquete te estoy mandando los libros que me pediste* 'I'm sending the books you asked me for in this parcel' (for *te mando . . .* Examples from *NGLE* 28.12s).

(1) Important: the verb *estar* is itself never used in the continuous form: ***está estando* is not Spanish. *Está siendo* is however possible: see 19.4.

19.1.2 The Spanish continuous and the English progressive compared

English speakers tend to assume that Spanish continuous forms, e.g. *estoy leyendo*, *estaban hablando*, etc. are the equivalent of the much-used English progressive verb forms like. 'I'm reading', 'they were talking'. However, there are several important differences:

(**a**) the present and imperfect tenses of the Spanish continuous refer to actions that are or were actually in progress (i.e. have or had already begun) or are or were being repeated, whereas the English progressive is constantly also used as a future tense and also, sometimes, to express habits:

Estoy comiendo	I'm (actually) eating (right now)
Estabas hablando	You were (in the middle of) talking

But

Llegamos mañana	**We're arriving** tomorrow (future)
Si te pones así, me voy	If you get like that, **I'm going** (future)
Mi hijo va a un colegio mixto	My son **is going** to a mixed (i.e. co-educational) school (habitual)
Te envío esta carta para decirte que . . .	**I'm sending** you this letter to tell you that . . . (really means 'I'm about to send')
Se casan (*se están casando* suggests they are in mid-ceremony)	**They're getting** married (i.e. they are going to get married)
Yo salía a la mañana siguiente para París	**I was leaving** the following morning for Paris (future in the past)
Hoy el Barça juega en casa	Today Barcelona **is/are playing** at home (*está jugando* possible if the game has begun)

See 19.5b for exceptions to this rule in the spoken Spanish of some Latin-American regions.

(**b**) The Spanish continuous is rarely used with the common verbs *ir*, *venir*, *volver* (but see 19.5a for exceptions in parts of Latin America):

¿Adónde vas?	Where are you going?
Viene la policía	The police are coming
Yo volvía cuando te vi	I was coming back when I saw you
Ya voy (see note 1)	I'm coming (see note 1)

(**c**) The Spanish continuous adds a nuance to, but does not always radically alter the meaning of the non-continuous verb form, so the two are sometimes virtually interchangeable. This tends to confuse English speakers, who sense a clear difference between 'she smokes' and 'she's smoking':

¡Que se queman/se están quemando las salchichas!	The sausages are burning!
Yo hablaba con Mario	I was talking to Mario/I used to talk to Mario
Yo estaba hablando con Mario	I was talking to Mario (but not 'I used to . . .')
—¿Qué haces? —Leo esta revista (SV, Ch., dialogue; or *—¿Qué estás haciendo? —Estoy leyendo . . .*)	'What are you doing?' 'I'm reading this magazine.'
No te conocía, ¿qué te pasa? Hablas raro (CMG, Sp., dialogue)	I didn't recognize you. What's the matter with you? You're talking strangely
No sé qué te pasa por la mente, Carlitos. No sé en qué piensas (MS, Mex., dialogue)	I don't know what's going through your, mind, Carlitos. I don't know what you're thinking about
El otro hombre está sentado en un sillón. Fuma (*El País*, Sp.)	The other man is seated/is sitting in an armchair. He is smoking

As the *NGLE* 28.12g points out, in spoken Spanish the continuous form is nowadays preferred when the action is already in progress. Thus *no me molestes, estoy trabajando* is more usual than . . . *trabajo* 'don't bother me. I'm working'.

(**d**) A number of common Spanish verbs do not appear in the continuous form, whereas their English counterparts do. See 19.3 for discussion.

(1) One says *voy* or *ya voy* for 'I'm coming' (in answer to the question 'where are you?') because one is leaving the place one is at, not coming towards it. English uses 'go' and 'come' vaguely, cf. 'are you coming/going to Sally's party?' Spanish clearly distinguishes between *venir* 'to come' and *ir* 'to go'.

19.1.3 Further remarks on the relationship between the simple present tense and the present continuous

The simple present tense, *escribo*, *hago*, etc., is imprecise: it may indicate present, future, habitual events, eternal truths or even past events (see 17.3 and 17.6.3). Present continuous forms are much more specifically present: compare *fuma* '(s)he smokes' or '(s)he's smoking' and *está fumando* '(s)he's (actually) smoking (*now*)'.

An action must be perceived to have started for the continuous to be possible. Spanish informants 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 apparently being that the speaker has not seen or heard rain falling (in this and several other cases, Latin-American informants tended to use the continuous more readily). Similarly, when someone up a tree shouts in English 'I'm falling!', (s)he literally means 'I'm going to fall', not 'I'm already in mid-air', so a Spanish speaker shouts *¡que me caigo!*, not *¡que me estoy cayendo!*

(1) With some verbs that refer to actions that are more or less prolonged events, e.g. *leer* 'to read', *charlar* 'to chat', *dormir* 'to sleep', or where the duration of an action is emphasized, the continuous makes better Spanish than the simple form. Most informants thought that *está leyendo* 'he's reading' was better than *lee* in reply to the question *¿qué hace Miguel?* 'what's Miguel doing?'.

(2) When an action is of very short duration, i.e. it cannot be extended, as is the case with verbs like *toser* 'to cough', *romper* 'to break', *firmar* 'to sign', *golpear* 'to hit', etc., the continuous can normally only indicate a series of repeated actions, as in English: *estaba tosiendo* '(s)he was coughing'. See 19.2.4.

19.2 Uses of the continuous forms

19.2.1 Continuous used to emphasize events in progress

The main use of the continuous forms is to emphasize that an event has or had already begun and is or was continuing at the time:

Ahora no se puede poner—está haciendo sus cuentas (not . . . *hace sus cuentas*)	(S)he can't come to the phone now — (s)he's doing his/her accounts
Estaba dándole una propina al mozo que me había subido la maleta cuando sonó el teléfono (LSP, Ch.)	I was (just) giving a tip to the boy who'd carried my bags up when the phone rang
¿No será que usted ha olvidado de qué le estoy hablando? (CF, Mex., dialogue)	It couldn't be, could it, that you've forgotten what I'm talking to you about?
Pero ¡si te estoy escuchando!/¡si te escucho!	But I *am* listening to you!
El rostro de María sonreía. Es decir, ya no sonreía, pero había estado sonriendo un décimo de segundo antes (ES, Arg.)	Maria's face was smiling. I mean, it wasn't smiling now, but it had been smiling a tenth of a second before

(1) In the case of the imperfect tense, the continuous and non-continuous are more or less interchangeable if they really refer to the past and the action is not habitual; i.e. *pensaba* and *estaba pensando* both mean '(s)he was thinking'/'you were thinking'. See 17.5.5 for discussion.

(2) For the preterite continuous, *estuve durmiendo/pensando*, etc. See 19.2.3.

19.2.2 Continuous used to denote temporary or surprising events

The continuous may optionally be used to show that an action is temporary or in some way unusual or surprising:

Vive en París, pero últimamente está viviendo/vive en Madrid	(S)he lives in Paris, but at the moment (s)he's living in Madrid
¡Qué sueño me está entrando! (CMG, Sp., dialogue)	I suddenly feel so sleepy!
¿Me estás diciendo que un hombre civilizado, un filósofo para colmo, prefiere convertirse en soldado? (JV, Mex., dialogue)	Are you telling me that a civilized man, a philosopher on top of that, prefers to become a soldier?!
—¿En qué estábamos pensando tú y yo cuando engendramos a estos seres, me quieres explicar?—le pregunta la madre al padre (CRG, Sp., dialogue; or *en qué pensábamos*)	'Would you mind explaining to me what were we thinking of when we conceived these creatures?' the mother asks the father

19.2.3 The preterite continuous

The preterite continuous, *estuve hablando/comiendo* 'I was speaking/eating for a time' has no counterpart in English. It adds a nuance to the non-continuous preterite, i.e. that an action was prolonged over a period but is also viewed as finished. The non-continuous preterite simply states that the event happened. (For more on the use of the preterite for finite periods see 17.4.2):

Estuve hablando dos horas con tu hermano	I spent two hours talking to your brother
Estuve andando hasta el amanecer (SP, Sp.)	I was walking/walked until dawn
Ahí está el libro que me hizo perder pie . . . lo estuve buscando antes no sé cuánto rato (CMG, Sp., dialogue)	There's the book I tripped over . . . I don't know how long I spent looking for it
Acuérdense, el señor ese con el que estuvimos tomando nieves en el zócalo de Atlixco (AM, Mex., dialogue; *nieves* = *helados* in Spain)	Remember, that gentleman we had an ice-cream with in the main square in Atlixco . . .

(1) When a period is viewed as finished the action itself may still continue: *estuve leyendo durante tres horas, y después continué leyendo hasta el amanecer* 'I read for three hours and afterwards I went on reading until morning'.

(2) The preterite continuous is really only possible with verbs that refer to naturally drawn-out actions, e.g. 'think', 'talk', 'read', 'wait', 'eat', etc. Verbs that refer to instantaneous actions cannot be extended: **estuvo rompiendo una ventana* '(s)he was breaking a window (for a certain time)' is not possible. Instantaneous actions can, however, be repeated over a period of time: *estuvo disparando al aire durante tres minutos* '(s)he spent three minutes firing into the air'.

This tense is not used with *ser*: *fui policía durante diez años* 'I was a policeman/woman for ten years', never ***estuve siendo . . .*

19.2.4 Continuous to express repeated events

The continuous may emphasize the idea that an event is or has been constantly recurring. In this case the event may not actually be occurring at the moment:

Está yendo mucho al cine estos días	(S)he's going to the cinema a lot these days
En sus diarios siempre está hablando de la familia (JC, Sp.)	In his diaries he's always talking about the family
Lleva años que se está yendo pero nunca acaba de irse	(S)he's been leaving for years but never gets round to going
Está haciendo frío	It's been cold lately/The weather's cold at the moment
Pero está usted tomando muy seguido esas hierbas y seguido hacen daño (AM, Mex. Dialogue. See 35.3.3 note 2 for this adverbial use of *seguido*)	But you're taking those herbs over long periods, and they cause harm when taken continuously

(1) In general, *ir* and *venir* are little used in the continuous form except to denote repetition: *había estado yendo y viniendo con charolas de tragos y botanas toda la tarde* (GZ, Mex.) 'he'd been coming and going with trays of drinks and snacks all afternoon and evening' (in Spain *charolas* = *bandejas*, *tragos* = *bebidas* and *botanas* = *pinchos*). Continuous forms of *ir* and *venir* are somewhat more common in Latin America. See 19.5.

(2) *Tener* is also found in the continuous to refer to repeated events: *estoy teniendo problemas con los vecinos* 'I'm having problems with the neighbours'. But the continuous is not used for single events: *tiene un problema con el vecino*, not **está teniendo un problema con el vecino* (s)he's got a problem with the neighbour'.

19.2.5 Future and conditional continuous

The future continuous is used either (**a**) to describe events which will already have begun at a certain time in the future, or (**b**) to conjecture about what may actually be happening at this moment:

Mañana a estas horas estaremos volando sobre el Pacífico	Tomorrow at this time we'll be flying over the Pacific
¿Qué sabes tú lo que es vivir para ponerle las zapatillas a un hombre? Pruébalo dos meses y al tercero ya estarás maldiciendo tu destino (TM, Sp., dialogue)	What do you know about living in order to put a man's slippers on? Try it for two months and by the third you'll be cursing your fate!
Estarán comiendo a estas horas	They'll probably be eating at this time of day
¿Qué estará haciendo ahora el hombre en la Estación Espacial Mir? (DES, Mex., dialogue)	I wonder what the man in the Mir Space Station is doing now
Pero, ¿vas a estar esperándola todo el día?	But are you going to keep on waiting for her all day?!

(1) The future perfect continuous can also be used to express conjectures: *no me habrás estado esperando, ya te dije que no te preocuparas* (CMG, Sp., dialogue) 'I hope you haven't been waiting for me, I told you not to worry'.

(2) The conditional continuous is used like its English counterpart 'would be . . . -ing': *yo sabía que a esa hora estarían comiendo* 'I knew that at that time they would be eating'. It can also express conjectures or suppositions about events that may have been going on: —*¿Por qué no contestaba al*

teléfono? —Estaría durmiendo '"Why wasn't (s)he answering the phone?" "(S)he must have been sleeping."'

19.3 Restrictions on the use of the continuous

(**a**) Continuous forms are not commonly used with certain verbs that refer to inner mental activities, e.g. *aborrecer* 'to loathe', *amar* 'to love', *odiar* 'to hate', *saber* 'to know': *odio tener que quedarme en casa* 'I hate having to stay at home'. In this respect Spanish and English more or less coincide, but some verbs which denote inner states or 'invisible' actions may appear in the continuous in Spanish but not in English, e.g.

No estaba creyendo nada de lo que ella decía (AG, Sp., dialogue)	She didn't believe a word she said
Estoy viendo que vamos a acabar mal	I can see we're going to end badly
Asegura que está deseando conocerte (ABV, Sp. dialogue)	He insists that he wants to meet you
Aún así, todo el dolor y todo el esfuerzo está mereciendo la pena (*CORPES*, Sp.)	Despite all this, all the suffering and all the effort is worthwhile
Estoy temiendo que va a llegar tarde	I'm afraid (s)he's going to arrive late

The last two of these examples would be more usually expressed by simple tenses: *merece . . ., temo . . .*

(**b**) The continuous is not used to describe states rather than actions. English often allows the progressive form for states:

Normalmente lleva corbata azul, pero hoy lleva una corbata roja	Normally he wears a blue tie, but today he's wearing a red tie
Tres arañas de luces colgaban del techo	Three chandeliers were hanging from the roof
Lo que falta es . . .	What's lacking is . . .
La luna brillaba alta, con reflejos plateados (GZ, Mex.)	The moon was shining silver beams high in the sky
Parece cansada (see note 4)	She's looking tired
¡Qué bien huele la madreselva hoy!	Isn't the honeysuckle smelling good today!

(**c**) The continuous is not used with *estar* (**estar estando* is not Spanish), *poder*, *haber* or, usually, at least in European and standard literary Spanish, with *ir*, *venir*, *regresar*, *volver*, *andar*, except in the frequentative sense discussed at 19.2.4. For more remarks on Latin-American usage see 19.5:

¿Adónde vas?	Where are you going?
Viene ahora	(S)he's coming now
Cuando volvíamos del cine (*me*) *subí un momento a ver a la abuela*	When we were coming back from the cinema I went up to see grandmother for a moment
Estás pesado hoy	You're being a pain today

(**d**) **Important**: verbs that describe physical posture or position, e.g. *se sienta* '(s)he sits down', *se agachó* '(s)he crouched', can refer only to an action, not to a state. English speakers constantly mistranslate sentences like 'he's sitting down' by *está sentándose* when they almost always mean *está sentado* 'he is seated'. See 23.4 for details.

(1) Use of the continuous with other 'mental' verbs is rare, but not impossible if the action is presented as changing or increasing, as in *te estoy queriendo cada vez más* 'I'm getting to love you more and more', *estoy sabiendo cada vez más cosas sobre ese amigo tuyo tan misterioso* 'I'm finding more and more out about that mysterious friend of yours' (from *GDLE* 46.3.2.1).

(2) *Doler* 'to hurt' may appear in either form, much as in English: *me duele/me está doliendo la barriga* 'my belly aches/is aching'. *La barriga* = 'belly' or 'intestines'. Prudish English speakers who call their intestines their 'stomach' (*el estómago*) cause great anatomical confusion. *Los intestinos*, *la tripa* or *la barriga* are not indelicate words.

(3) For the continuous of *tener* 'to have' see 19.2.4.

(4) *Parecer* 'to seem' occasionally appears in the continuous: *la situación me está pareciendo/me parece cada vez más fea* 'the situation's looking uglier and uglier to me'.

19.4 Continuous forms of *ser*

Some grammarians have claimed that forms like *está siendo* '(s)he/it is being' are borrowed from English, 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 to Spanish the nuance that distinguishes our 'he was good' from 'he was being good'. The Academy (*NGLE* 28.12m) does not object:

Por un instante pensó que de algún modo él, Martín, estaba de verdad siendo necesario a aquel ser atormentado (ES, Arg.)	For an instant he thought that he, Martin, was really being necessary to that tormented creature
La convocatoria a las distintas manifestaciones está siendo variada (*La Vanguardia*, Sp.)	The people attending the different demonstrations come from various sources (lit. 'the calling to the several demonstrations is varied')
Yo no estoy siendo juzgado (CF, Mex., dialogue)	I'm not being judged
Estás siendo muy bueno hoy	You're being very good today

19.5 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 colloquial variants, and it seems, in general, that the continuous is used more extensively in Latin-American speech than in Spain.

(**a**) In many places, the continuous of *ir*, *venir* and other verbs of motion is heard:

—*Estamos yendo a Pato Huachana —dijo Lalita* (MVLl, Pe., dialogue)	'We're going to Pato Huachana,' Lalita said
Estaba yendo a tomar un café con leche en Brosa (ibid.)	I was on my way to Brosa to have a white coffee
¿Cómo le va yendo? (Chile, quoted Kany, 282; Sp. *¿Cómo le va?*)	How are things with you?
Él está yendo a una de esas escuelas que mandé a construir cuando el oro abundaba (ET, Mex., dialogue. Sp. *mandé construir*)	He's going to one of those schools I had built when there was plenty of gold around

In Spain one would use *vamos*, *iba*, *le va*, *va* in these sentences, but forms like *están viniendo* 'they're coming' seem to be spreading among younger people.

(b) In colloquial language in a number of places including Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia, the present continuous is used, as in English, to express a pre-scheduled future: *mañana estoy yendo a París* 'tomorrow I'm going to Paris' (= *mañana voy a París*), *nos estamos viendo* 'see you later'/'I'll be seeing you' This is not found in European or literary Latin-American Spanish.

(1) 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 usage is not heard in standard Spanish. However, the Peninsular colloquial form *irse yendo* is worth noting: *me voy a ir yendo* (CMG, Sp., dialogue), 'I'm on my way/I'm off/I'm out of here'.

(2) In colloquial Mexican, *andar* is much used instead of *estar* to form the continuous: *ando trabajando* 'I'm working', *¿qué andas haciendo?* 'what are you doing?', *no andará tomando tan temprano, ¿verdad?* (EM, Mex., dialogue, Sp. *tomando* = *bebiendo* [*alcohol*]) 'surely he isn't drinking this early, is he?' 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 24.8.1 for discussion and examples.

20 The subjunctive

This chapter discusses the following topics:

- General remarks on the Spanish subjunctive (Section 20.1)
- Words that may trigger the subjunctive in all types of clause, including words meaning 'perhaps' (Section 20.2)
- The subjunctive in subordinate clauses introduced by the conjunction *que* (Section 20.3)
- The subjunctive in clauses introduced by other subordinators (Section 20.4)
- Translating 'whether . . . or', 'however', 'whatever', 'whoever', 'whichever', 'the more . . . the more . . .', 'wherever' (Section 20.5)
- The subjunctive in relative clauses see Chapter 39
- Use of the subjunctive to make imperatives see Chapter 21
- Tense agreement: subjunctive (Section 20.8)
- The future subjunctive (Section 20.9)
- Appendix to chapter

Some topics likely to interest advanced students are treated in the Appendix to this chapter:

- The subjunctive and 'uncertainty', advantages of the Spanish subjunctive, regional variations in the use of the subjunctive, Subjunctive 'contamination' (Sections 20.10–13)

20.1 General remarks on the Spanish subjunctive

20.1.1 The difficulties posed by the Spanish subjunctive

The subjunctive is constantly used in Spanish in all styles and countries, but it is a notorious problem for English-speaking learners. The main reasons for this are:

- English speakers often see no point to the subjunctive now that it is almost obsolete in their own language. Section 20.11 lists some examples of what English loses by lacking an equivalent of the Spanish subjunctive.
- Manuals of Spanish repeatedly claim that the subjunctive has a 'meaning' associated with 'doubt' or 'uncertainty'. This is so misleading that it is confusing to say so. Section 20.10 discusses this problem further.
- There is no single underlying rule that explains the use of the Spanish subjunctive – or if there is it is too complicated to be useful. The best approach is simply to learn when to use the subjunctive without asking 'why?' or 'what does it mean?'
- The rules for the use of the Spanish subjunctive have arbitrary and disconcerting exceptions. Why, for example, do we say *quizás* ***lleguen*** *mañana* (subjunctive) but *a lo mejor* ***llegan*** *mañana* (indicative) when both mean 'perhaps they/you will arrive tomorrow'?

20.1.2 Forms of the subjunctive

There are three simple, i.e. non-compound, tenses of the Spanish subjunctive: present, imperfect and future. Only the first two are in everyday use: the present, formed as explained at 16.7.5, and the imperfect, of which there are two forms, one in *-ra* and one in *-se*. The latter two forms are explained at 16.7.6 and all the forms are shown at 16.3. The relationship between the *-ra* and

-se forms is discussed in the next section. The future subjunctive, discussed at 20.9, is virtually obsolete.

Compound tenses of the subjunctive, e.g. *haya hablado*, *hubiera/hubiese hablado* (also mentioned at 18.2.9 and 18.5), and continuous forms of the subjunctive, e.g. *esté hablando*, *estuviera/estuviese hablando*, are also common.

20.1.3 The *-ra* and *-se* imperfect subjunctive forms compared

The *-ra* and *-se* forms are interchangeable when they are used as subjunctives, and the two forms are shown side by side in the unattributed examples in this book. The *-ra* form is much more frequent everywhere, is gaining ground, and in some parts of Latin America has all but replaced the *-se* form in speech, if not in writing. The *-ra* form also has a few uses with an indicative meaning that it does not share with the *-se* form. These are discussed at 18.3.2 and 18.3.3.

The *-ra* form is also used in a few set phrases: see 20.2.7.

20.1.4 Regional variations in the use of the subjunctive

There are a few variations, most of them colloquial or popular, in the use of the subjunctive that students may encounter on both continents. These are discussed in the Appendix to this chapter, 20.12.

20.2 Words that may trigger the subjunctive in all types of clause

This section deals with words that often or always trigger the subjunctive whether they appear in main clauses or subordinate clauses.

20.2.1 *Tal vez*, and *quizá*(*s*) 'perhaps', *posiblemente*, *probablemente*

With all these words, when the event referred to is happening in the present or happened in the past, use of the subjunctive is optional. The subjunctive makes the possibility of the event rather weaker:

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 dispute. Maybe they were putting on an act for my benefit
Tal vez debió irse (*El País*, Sp., or *debiera/debiese haberse ido*)	Perhaps he should have gone/resigned
Tal vez tengamos algo de culpa nosotros mismos (SV, Ch., dialogue)	Perhaps we're partly to blame ourselves
Quizá ni siquiera entabláramos conversación (JM, Sp.)	Perhaps we didn't even start up a conversation
Quizá hubo momentos en los que pude ser más estricto (*La Jornada*, Mex., interview)	Maybe there were moments when I could have been more strict
Quizá algunos de los encargados de allí fueran protestantes (ibid.)	Perhaps some of the people in charge there were Protestants
Posiblemente quedara algo de alcohol etílico en nuestras venas humorísticas (GGM, Col.)	Possibly there was still some ethyl alcohol left in the veins of our humour

Probablemente en ningún momento te fuiste del cuarto . . . (JC, Arg., dialogue)	Probably you never left the room for a moment
Probablemente el mérito sea de Ada (CRG, Sp., dialogue)	You can probably thank Ada for that

If the event is still in the future, the present subjunctive or the future indicative or the conditional can be used, but **not** a present or past indicative tense. English-speakers constantly say **quizás viene mañana* for the correct *quizás venga mañana*.

Tal vez me lo expliques cuando te llegue la hora (LS, Ch., dialogue)	Perhaps you'll explain it to me when the time's right for you
Quizá España podrá desempeñar un papel particularmente activo . . . (*El País*, Sp.)	Perhaps Spain will be able to play a particularly active role . . .
Quizá sería la mejor solución . . .	Maybe it would be the best solution
Posiblemente esta/ésta sea la camioneta más lujosa que hayas visto en tu vida (*Excélsior*, Mex.)	Possibly this is/may be the most luxurious minibus you've seen in your life

If the event *was* still in the future, only the imperfect subjunctive, pluperfect 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', *tal vez habría sido un buen padre* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'maybe he'd have been a good father'.

(1) Both *quizá* and *quizás* are acceptable, but the former is more common in formal writing in Spain according to Manuel Seco. *Quizás* seems to be preferred before words beginning with a vowel, a practice recommended by *El País*. *Tal vez* (written *talvez* in Latin America) and *quizá*(*s*) are equally common in both continents.

(2) The conditional is common after these words to make the statement more tentative: *quizá habría que revisar asimismo estos conceptos* (AG, Sp.) 'it may also be necessary to modify these ideas', *tal vez el presidente prolongaría su periodo y tomaría medidas extremas contra los izquierdistas* (JA, Mex.) 'perhaps the president would prolong his stay in office and take extreme measures against the left-wingers'.

(3) Important: the subjunctive can only be used if the word meaning 'perhaps' precedes the verb it modifies: one can only say ***era**, tal vez, un efecto de esta política . . .* 'it was, perhaps, an effect of this policy . . .', but *tal vez era/fuera/fuese un efecto . . .*

20.2.2 *Acaso*

Acaso can mean 'perhaps' and it obeys the same rules as *quizá*(*s*), but it is rather literary in this meaning: *acaso comprendía ahora el error de haberse confiado en la capacidad del mito de Perón para gobernar a una sociedad compleja* (MSQ, Arg.) 'perhaps she now understood the mistake of having relied on the ability of the Perón myth to govern a complex society', *. . . una generación que acaso no volviera a ser feliz fuera de sus retratos* (GGM, Col.) '. . . a generation that would perhaps never again be happy outside its portraits'. It is more often found with the indicative in all styles in rhetorical, often sarcastic, questions, i.e. ones to which the speaker already knows the answer:

¿Acaso has visto alguna vez que no llueva en verano? (implies 'of course you haven't . . .')	Have you ever known it not to rain in summer? (lit. 'have you ever seen that it didn't rain in summer?')
¿Acaso no tiene quien le lave la ropa en casa? (GZ, Mex., dialogue)	Don't you have someone at home to wash your clothes?

¿Acaso todos los paganos no odian a los huambisas? (MVLl, Pe., dialogue)	Don't all the Indians (lit. 'pagans') hate the Huambisa tribe?

(1) In colloquial Mexican *a poco . . .* can mean more or less the same: *¿a poco crees que no se iban a dar cuenta?*(MC, Mex., dialogue) 'do you really think they wouldn't realize?'

20.2.3 *A lo mejor* and *de repente*

These also mean 'perhaps' but they do not take the subjunctive.

(a) ***A lo mejor*** is very common on both continents and is more typical of spoken language or informal writing:

A lo mejor se ha quedado en casa	Perhaps/Maybe (s)he's stayed at home
Ni siquiera la nombró. A lo mejor se ha olvidado de ella (MVLl, Pe., dialogue)	He didn't even mention her. Maybe he's forgotten her
A lo mejor el loco era él (EP, Mex.)	Maybe *he* was the lunatic

(b) ***De repente*** is widely used in informal Latin-American speech to mean 'perhaps' but it can also mean 'suddenly', this being its only meaning in Spain. It does not take the subjunctive: *o porque, de repente, nosotros somos los autores de esos anónimos . . . ¿Se le ha ocurrido, no?* (MVLl, Pe., dialogue) 'or because, perhaps, we're the authors of those anonymous letters . . . That thought's occurred to you, hasn't it?'

20.2.4 *Igual, lo mismo*

These are used to mean 'perhaps' in familiar speech in Spain, but not in writing, and they are followed by the indicative: *yo no sé lo que me espera hoy. Igual llego tarde* (CRG, Sp., dialogue) 'I don't know what's in store for me today. Maybe I'll get back late'; *llama a la puerta. Lo mismo te da una propina* 'knock on the door. Maybe he'll give you a tip'.

These words are not used in Latin America to mean 'perhaps', although the variant *igual y . . .*. occurs colloquially in Mexico: *a veces cuando un lazo se estrecha de más* (Sp. *demasiado*), *en lugar de unir corta lo que amarraba. Igual y eso fue* (AM, Mex., dialogue) 'sometimes when a bond (i.e. between two people) grows too tight, instead of joining it cuts what it was holding together. Maybe that was it'.

Latin Americans may interpret *igual* as 'anyway'/'all the same' as in *también mi estómago se mueve pero igual estoy contento* (MB, Ur., dialogue) 'my stomach's churning too, but I'm happy all the same'.

20.2.5 Words that express a wish

These are such words as *ojalá, ya, así, quién* – the latter is a special use of the word which more usually means 'who?' They require the subjunctive.

¡Ojalá nos toque la lotería!	Let's hope we win the lottery!
Ojalá se le queme el arroz (AA, Cu. dialogue)	I hope her rice burns
. . . y pensé quién fuera escritor . . . (ABE, Pe.)	. . . and I thought: if only I were a writer
Ya/Así fueran/fuesen como tú todas las mujeres	If only all women were like you . . .
Así se te pegue mi catarro! (parodies a gypsy curse)	I hope you get my cold!

(1) *Que* followed by the subjunctive is a very common way of expressing a wish: *que te vaya bien* 'let's hope things go well for you', *que no vuelva a suceder* 'let's hope it doesn't happen again', *¡Que no se vaya! —pensaba —¡que no eche a volar!* (AM, Mex., dialogue) '"Please don't let him leave!" I thought, "don't let him fly away!"'. These are really sentences in which some main clause like *espero que* 'I hope that' or *quiero que* 'want . . .' has been omitted.

(2) *Quién* when used thus can only refer to the speaker him/herself, *quién fuera millonario* can only mean 'if only I were a millionaire'. It is followed by the imperfect or pluperfect subjunctive.

(3) In some set phrases a subjunctive on its own can express a wish: *¡viva el rey!* 'long live the King!', *¡mueran los tiranos!* 'death to tyrants!', *Dios te bendiga* 'God bless you'. For more on this see third-person imperatives, 21.6.

(4) The form *ojalá y . . .* is heard in colloquial Mexican: *ojalá y se te haga* (JGRI, Mex., dialogue, Sp. *ojalá se te haga a ti/ojalá te lo hagan a ti*) 'I hope they do it/the same to you!'

20.2.6 *De ahí que*

This means 'hence the fact that . . .' and it usually takes the subjunctive, although the reason for this is not obvious:

De ahí que el Papa haya incluso presionado al nuevo Gobierno (*El País*, Sp.)	This is why the Pope has even put pressure on the new Government
De ahí que en cada nuevo atentado sintieran que recuperaban su primitiva fuerza (MSQ, Arg.)	Hence the fact that with every new terrorist attack they felt they were regaining their original strength

But the indicative is possible: *de ahí que el costo de la que iba a ser vivienda presidencial, su aparatosa opulencia,* ***resultaban*** *difícilmente compatibles con la austeridad que debía evidenciar el jefe de una administración* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'hence the fact that the cost of what was to be the presidential residence and its spectacular opulence were incompatible with the austerity expected of the head of a government'.

(**1**) It is not clear why phrases meaning 'the fact that . . .' usually take the subjunctive when they clearly point to a concrete fact; this point is discussed further at 20.3.19.

20.2.7 Subjunctive in some common set phrases

(**a**) ***O sea que*** 'in other words':

Ha dicho que tiene que trabajar, o sea que no quiere venir	(S)he said (s)he had to work, in other words (s)he doesn't want to come

(**b**) ***Que . . . sepa/que . . . recuerde*****:**

Que yo recuerde es la primera vez que lo/le veo	As far as I remember it's the first time I've seen him
Nada que yo sepa (JMa, Sp., dialogue)	Nothing, as far as I know
Que se sepa nadie lo ha hecho antes	As far as is known, no one has done it before

(**c**) **In a few other set phrases:**

¡Acabáramos!	So that's what it's all about!/Now I get it!
Otro gallo nos cantara	That would have been another story . . .

. . . ni que fueras millonario	. . . anyone would think you're a millionaire
¡Vaya tontería!	What nonsense!
¡Venga! (constantly heard in Spain)	OK/fine/right

20.3 The subjunctive in subordinate clauses introduced by the conjunction *que*

20.3.1 General

This lengthy section deals with sentences like '**it is a pity** that it rained', '**I hope** that you're feeling better', '**it's possible** that we'll get paid tomorrow', '**I told** them to do it', '**they didn't say** that they saw a UFO', where the bold type indicates the main clause and the rest is a subordinate clause.

Use of the subjunctive in the subordinate clause depends on the meaning of the main clause, as the translations show (subjunctives in bold): *es una pena que* ***haya*** *llovido*, *espero que te* ***sientas*** *mejor*, *es posible que nos* ***paguen*** *mañana*, *les dije que lo* ***hicieran/hiciesen***, *no dijeron que* ***hubieran/hubiesen*** *visto un ovni.*

Note that this section does not deal with relative clauses, e.g. *este/éste es el cuadro que pintó Picasso* 'this is the picture that Picasso painted' or *buscamos un hotel que tenga piscina* 'we're looking for a hotel that has a swimming pool'. These also require the subjunctive in certain circumstances and are discussed at 39.15.

20.3.2 Tense agreement and the subjunctive

This is discussed in detail at 20.8. In the majority of cases the following scheme applies:

Tense of verb in main clause	Tense of subjunctive verb
Present, Perfect, Future, Imperative	Present
Conditional or any past tense	Imperfect

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

(1) The present subjunctive may refer to the present or to the future. *Espero que trabajes* can mean either 'I hope you're working' (more likely . . . *que estés trabajando*) or 'I hope you'll work', *confío en que hagas un esfuerzo* means 'I trust you're making an effort' or '. . . will make an effort'.

(2) Note that for the purposes of agreement the perfect tense – *he hablado*, *han hecho* – is usually treated as a present tense: *te he dicho que te largues* (JM, Sp., dialogue) 'I told you to beat it/clear off'. See 20.8d for details.

20.3.3 Main clauses that state a fact or a belief, or consist of a question

The subjunctive is **not** used in the subordinate clause when:

(**a**) the main clause says that an event or fact is, was or will be true: *es cierto que hubo una conspiración* 'it's true that there was a conspiracy', *era obvio que lo había hecho* 'it was obvious that (s)he'd

done it', *se prevé que habrá déficit* 'a deficit is forecasted', *se queja de que está cansada* 'she complains that she's tired' (*quejarse de* is usually treated as stating a fact: see 20.3.10 note 1);

(**b**) when the main clause declares the subject's *belief* or *opinion* that something happened, is happening or will happen: *creo que hubo una conspiración* 'I think there was a conspiracy', *yo pensaba que él era más alto* 'I thought he was taller', *dicen que nos llamarán* 'they say they'll call us', *parece que su mujer está mejor* 'it seems that his wife is feeling better'. There are occasional exceptions to (b) discussed at 20.3.21.

(c) When the main clause is a direct or indirect question: *¿crees que es verdad?* 'do you think it's true', *¿sabía usted que Marco es cubano?* 'did you now that Marco is Cuban?', *¿usted cree que mi vida se vendería?* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'do you think my life story would sell?'. For colloquial Latin-American exceptions to this rule see 20.12.1.

(1) Important: if the main clause is negative, the subordinate clause usually requires the subjunctive. See the next section.

(2) The phrase *el hecho de que* 'the fact that . . .' and others meaning the same thing usually require the subjunctive. See 20.3.19.

(3) As far as (**b**) is concerned, Spanish differs from Italian and resembles French. Compare *creo que es verdad/je crois que c'est vrai* 'I think it is true' – both verbs indicative – and Italian *credo che **sia** vero*, second verb subjunctive.

20.3.4 Negative main clauses + *que* generally require a subjunctive in the subordinate clause

Important: if the main clause is negated, the verb in the subordinate clause is almost always in the subjunctive: *esto no significa que ya **sepan** todo el uno del otro* (*La Reforma*, Mex.) 'this does not mean that they already know everything about one another'. See 20.3.15.

20.3.5 If the main clause means 'it is possible'/'probable that . . .', the subjunctive is required

This includes main clauses meaning 'it could happen that . . .', 'it is possible that . . .', 'the risk that . . .', 'the danger that . . .', 'it is inevitable that . . .', 'the possibility/probability/likelihood that' . . ., etc.:

Es posible que/Puede que haya tormenta	There may be a storm
Era probable/previsible que sucediera/ sucediese así	It was probable/foreseeable that it would happen that way
La sola posibilidad de que aquella muchacha no lo viese más lo desesperaba (ES, Arg.)	The mere possibility that that girl wouldn't see him again filled him with despair
Existe el riesgo de que quienes reciben el dinero no sean capaces de resarcirlo (JV, Mex.)	There is the risk that those who receive the money won't be able to pay it back
Es inevitable que los autores . . . pierdan su capacidad creadora (JM, Sp.)	It is inevitable that authors will lose their creative ability
También puede ocurrir que Santiago prefiera tener a Graciela en una relación deteriorada (MB, Ur., dialogue)	It may also be the case that Santiago prefers being with (lit. 'having') Graciela in a shaky relationship
Está previsto que la tormenta . . . dure al menos 36 horas (*El Periódico*, Sp.)	The storm is predicted to last at least 36 hours

(1) *Pueda* (*ser*) *que* is a common Latin-American colloquial alternative for *puede que/puede ser que* 'maybe'/'it may be that': *pueda que algo te den y te mejores* (MP, Arg., dialogue) 'maybe they'll give you something and you'll get better'. The *NGLE* 24.11 prefers *puede* (*ser*) *que*.

(2) See 20.12.4 for the colloquial Latin-American use of the indicative in the subordinate clause in the above sentences. See also 20.12.4 for the colloquial Latin-American *capaz que* 'it is possible that . . .', not used in Spain.

20.3.6 Main clause contains a verb or phrase meaning 'depends on'/'relies on'

Main clauses + *que* that mean 'to depend on . . .' require the subjunctive

Yo dependo de que me devuelvan el dinero a tiempo	I'm depending on them giving me the money back in time
De las mujeres depende que se coma en el mundo (AM, Mex., 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/le llamaran/llamasen aquella noche	Miguel was counting on them calling him that night

20.3.7 Main clause means 'want', 'permit', 'forbid', 'allow', 'order', etc. + *que*

This covers a vast range of sentences. If the basic meaning of the main clause is some phrase that means wanting, ordering, needing, causing, allowing, advising, persuading, encouraging, ensuring that . . . followed by *que*, the subjunctive is required in the subordinate clause: *yo quiero que Simón lo* ***haga*** 'I want Simón to do it', *aconsejaban que el comité lo rechazara/rechazase* 'they advised the committee to reject it'. Examples:

Organicé que todas nos vistiéramos como ellas (AM, Mex., dialogue)	I arranged it so that all of us women dressed like them
Me salvé de puro milagro de que los ladrones me mataran/matasen	By a sheer miracle I avoided being killed by the thieves
No puedes pretender que cambien las cosas (JA, Sp., dialogue)	You can't expect things to change
El primer paso, le dijo, era lograr que ella se diera cuenta de su interés (GGM, Col., dialogue)	The first thing to do, she said to him, was to get her to notice his interest
Hay que evitar que ellos se enteren	We have to avoid them finding out
Es necesario/imprescindible que lo reciban para mañana	It is necessary/essential that they receive it by tomorrow
Asegúrate de que antes de verme haya ido a misa (EM, Mex., dialogue)	Make sure that he's been to Mass before he sees me

The following are more examples of verbs that require the subjunctive (except in the circumstances described in note 1):

causar que to cause	*cuidar de que* to take care that
conseguir que to succeed in	*dar lugar a que* to give rise to
contribuir a que to contribute to	*decir que* to tell someone to (see note 3)

desear que to want
dificultar que to hinder
esforzarse porque to make an effort to
evitar/impedir que to avoid
exigir que to require that
hacer que to make/cause to
hacer falta que to be necessary that
insistir/empeñarse en que to insist on
necesitar que to need to
ocasionar que to cause/give rise to
oponerse a que to be against
pedir que to ask/request that (but see 20.3.9)
preferir que to prefer that
pretender que to aim for/to aspire to
procurar que to try to
querer que to want
rogar que to request that
salvar de que to rescue/save from
ser necesario que to be necessary that
suplicar que to implore to
tratar de que to try to ensure that
vigilar que to make sure that
luchar por que to struggle to

(1) Important: when the subjects in the main and the subordinate clause refer to the same person or thing, the infinitive is used: *Teresa quiere* ***hacerlo*** 'Teresa wants to do it', *pretendía hablar chino* '(s)he claimed (s)he spoke Chinese'. However, some verbs, especially verbs of permitting and prohibiting, can optionally be used with an infinitive even when the subjects are different. This possibility is discussed in 20.3.8c.

(2) There are many alternative ways of expressing the ideas associated with these verbs, e.g. by using adjectives, as in *es necesario/deseable que . . .* 'it's necessary/desirable that . . .' or nouns, as in *la petición/obligación de que . . .* 'the request/obligation that . . .', *la causa/el origen de que* 'the cause of . . .'. These also require the subjunctive when they are followed by the conjunction *que*, e.g. *su insistencia en que contestaran/contestasen en seguida* 'his/her insistence on them replying immediately', *soy partidario de que lo publiquen* 'I support them publishing it', *el anhelo de que Dios exista* 'the longing for God to exist', *la necesidad de que las fuerzas armadas se profesionalizaran* (JA, Mex.) 'the need for the armed forces to be professionalized'. See 37.4.2 for the use of *de que* after most of these noun phrases.

(3) Some verbs may or may not require the subjunctive according to their meaning. They take the subjunctive only when an order or wish is implied: *decidió que lo firmaran/firmasen* '(s)he decided that they should sign it', *decidió que lo habían firmado* '(s)he decided (i.e. 'came to the conclusion') that they had signed it', *dijo que se terminara/terminase* '(s)he said (ordered) that it should be finished', *dijo que se había terminado* '(s)he said (i.e. 'announced') that it was finished', *establecer que* 'to stipulate that' (subjunctive)/'to establish the truth that' (indicative), *pretender que* 'to try to'/'to aim at'/'wish that' (subjunctive)/'to claim that' (indicative), *escribir* 'to write that' (indicative)/'to write instructing that' (subjunctive), *insistir en que* 'to insist that', as in *insisto en que es la verdad* (indicative) 'I insist that it is the truth', but *insisto en que usted me diga la verdad* 'I insist on you telling me the truth', *se me ocurrió que era él* 'it occurred to me that it was him', *se me ocurrió que me pagaran/pagasen por ello* 'it occurred to me that they should pay me for it' (wish).

(4) The remarks in the preceding note also apply to noun phrases that mean 'want', 'allow', etc. Compare *la idea de que la tierra giraba alrededor del sol* 'the idea that the Earth revolved round the Sun' (statement of fact: indicative) and *la idea era que las chicas ayudasen/ayudaran a los chicos* 'the idea was that the girls **should** help the boys' (intention or wish: subjunctive. Compare *la idea era que las chicas ayudaban . . .* 'the idea was that the girls **were** helping . . .'; statement of fact).

(5) Statements of 'hope' are discussed at 20.3.23.

(6) For the subjunctive with *pedir* 'to ask for' see 20.3.9.

(7) *Decir de* + infinitive is not standard Spanish: **le dije de hacerlo* should be *le dije que lo hiciera/hiciese* 'I told him/her/you to do it', a fact that students of French should bear in mind (cf. *je lui ai dit de le faire*). However, *decir de* + infinitive with the meaning 'to tell someone to . . .' occurs in

popular speech on both continents and is apparently spreading although it is not yet accepted in careful styles.

20.3.8 Use of the infinitive with phrases meaning 'want', 'permit', 'forbid', 'oblige', etc.

Some of the verbs listed under 20.3.7, and certain other verbs not mentioned so far, may appear with the infinitive, thus avoiding the subjunctive (for *pedir* and similar verbs of requesting, see 20.3.9). This occurs:

(**a**) As we stated in 20.3.7 note 1, when the subject of the main clause and the subject of the subordinate clause refer to the same person or thing: *quiero hacerlo* 'I want to do it' but *quiero que **tú** lo hagas* 'I want you to do it'. *Sólo así evitarían aumentar impuestos* (JA, Mex.) 'only in this way would they avoid raising taxes' (the subject of *evitarían* and *aumentar* is 'they')

(**b**) In impersonal constructions (i.e. when there is no identifiable subject):

Hacía falta conseguir más gasolina	It was necessary to get more petrol/US gas
Se exigía presentar los documentos	The documents were required to be presented
Eso evita pensar en lo que dejaste afuera (APR, Sp., dialogue)	That avoids one having to think about what you left out

(c) With certain verbs, even when they are not impersonal and have different subjects. These are verbs that can be constructed with an indirect object, as in *te ayudaré a conseguir/a que consigas lo que quieres* 'I'll help you to get what you want'. The most common of these verbs are:

acostumbrar a to accustom to	*desafiar a* to challenge to	*llevar a* to lead to
animar a to encourage to	*enseñar a* to teach to	*mandar a* to send to do
autorizar a to authorize to	*forzar a* to force to	*mandar* to order
ayudar a to help to	*hacer* to make (i.e. cause to)	*obligar a* to oblige to
condenar a to condemn to	*impedir* to prevent	*ordenar* to order
conducir a to lead to	*impulsar a* to impel to	*permitir* to allow/to permit
conseguir to manage to	*incitar a* to encourage to	*prohibir* to forbid
contribuir a to contribute to	*inducir a* to persuade to	*retar a* to challenge to
convidar a to invite to	*instar a* to urge to	*tentar a* to tempt to
dejar to let/allow	*invitar a* to invite to	

Examples

Le acostumbré/animé/autoricé/ayudé a hacerlo/a que lo hiciera/hiciese	I accustomed/encouraged/allowed/helped him/her to do it
Le condené/desafié/enseñé/forcé/impulsé/incité a hacerlo/a que lo hiciese/hiciera	I condemned/challenged/taught/forced/impelled/incited him/her to do it
Le induje/invité/mandé/obligué/reté/tenté a hacerlo/a que lo hiciera/hiciese	I induced/invited/sent/obliged/challenged/tempted him/her to do it
Le dejó/hizo hacerlo/que lo hiciera/hiciese	(S)he let/made him/her do it
Le impidió hacerlo/que lo hiciese/hiciera	(S)he prevented him/her from doing it
Le mandó/permitió/prohibió hacerlo/que lo hiciera/hiciese	(S)he ordered/allowed/prohibited him/her from doing it
Cf. *le mandé a hacerlo/a que lo hiciera/hiciese*	I sent him/her to do it
Déjanos a los hombres conversar en paz (MVLl, Pe., dialogue)	Leave us men to talk in peace

La dosis de vanidad que todos tenemos dentro hizo que me sintiera el hombre más orgulloso de la Tierra (Che Guevara, in *Granma*, Cu.)	The dose of vanity that we all have within us made me feel the proudest man on Earth
Hagámosle creer que nos costó un gran esfuerzo (ES, Mex., dialogue)	Let's make him believe it cost us a big effort
Irala me convidó a acompañarla (JLB, Arg., dialogue; or *a que la acompañara*)	Irala invited me to accompany her
Había ordenado retirarse a todas sus sirvientas (AG, Sp., or . . . *a todas sus sirvientas que se retirasen/retiraran*)	She had ordered all her ladies-in-waiting to withdraw

(1) Some verbs are in a transitional state. The older construction with the subjunctive is probably safer for foreigners, but the infinitive construction is often heard and is seen in written language:

aconsejar to advise	*pedir* to ask (but see 20.3.9)	*recomendar* to recommend
obstaculizar to hinder	*proponer* to propose	*sugerir* to suggest

Te propuse hacerlo/que lo hiciéramos/hiciésemos	I suggested to you that we should do it
Te confieso que te propuse fugarnos (ABE, Pe., dialogue)	I admit that I suggested to you that we should elope
Octavia, a quien una vez le sugerí pasar a la otra parte (ibid.)	Octavia, to whom I once suggested that she should go over to the other side
Incluso las radioemisoras aconsejaron con insistencia a los capitalinos abstenerse de salir (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	Even the radio stations strongly advised residents of the capital to avoid going out

(2) Some of the verbs listed in this section can appear without a direct object in their main clause whereas English requires a dummy object like 'one' or 'people': *un delgado vestido que impedía llevar nada bajo él/. . . que se llevara/llevase 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'.

(3) When the object is non-living and the subject is human the subjunctive should be used. One can say *la hiciste reír* 'you made her laugh', but not **se puede hacer un ordenador solucionar ese problema* for . . . *hacer que un ordenador solucione ese problema* 'one can get a computer to solve that problem' (impersonal *se* counts as a human subject); *el experto técnico puede hacer que el acompañamiento se oiga menos* 'the technical expert can make the backing sound less loud' but not *. . . *puede hacer al acompañamiento oírse menos.*

(4) When both subject and object are non-living it seems that either construction is possible, although the safe option is the subjunctive: *el embalse permite que las aguas del río alcancen unos niveles adecuados* (possibly . . . *permite a las aguas alcanzar . . .*) 'the dam allows the water of the river to reach suitable levels', . . . *vientos flojos que harán bajar las temperaturas* (*Radio Nacional de España*) '. . . light winds that will cause temperatures to fall'.

20.3.9 Use of the infinitive or subjunctive with *pedir* and verbs of similar meaning

Pedir and other verbs of similar meaning, e.g. *rogar* 'to request', seem to be in a transitional state with respect to the use of the infinitive.

They are used with an infinitive when the subjects are identical: *pidió hablar con el director* '(s)he asked to speak to the director', *pidió verme a las seis* '(s)he asked to see me at six o'clock'.

They normally require *que* and the subjunctive when the subjects are different, as do other verbs of requesting: *pidió/suplicó/rogó que contestaran/contestasen cuanto antes* '(s)he asked/implored/requested them to answer as soon as possible', *pidió al reportero que tuviera la gentileza de llamar a un colega mexicano* (ES, Mex.) 'she asked the reporter [Sp. *periodista*] if he would kindly call a Mexican colleague'.

However, when the subject of the main verb is impersonal *se*, the infinitive is found in public notices of the type *se ruega a los residentes no llevar las toallas a la piscina* 'residents are requested not to take the towels to the swimming pool'.

In other cases, use of the infinitive when the subjects are different is not usually accepted in standard language in Spain, but it is found in Latin America: *yo sé que pidió a los muchachos no abrir la boca* (DT, Mex., dialogue) 'I know he asked the boys not to open their mouths', *le pidió dejarlo solo con los varones* (GGM, Col.) 'he asked her to leave him alone with the men' (normally *le pidió que lo dejara/dejase solo*); *pidió a la sociedad denunciar a quienes hagan dichas peticiones* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'he asked society to report anyone making such requests [for money]'.

Nevertheless, the infinitive construction is increasingly common in Spain in journalistic styles, especially headlines, e.g. *Amnistía Internacional pide al gobierno español presionar* (for *que presione*) *a Chile* (*El País*, Sp.) 'Amnesty International asks Spanish government to pressure Chile'. Moreover, sentences like *me pidió salir con él* 'he asked me to go out with him' (for *que saliera/saliese*), *nos pidieron ir con ellos al cine* 'they asked us to go with them to the cinema' (for *que fuéramos/fuésemos*) are nowadays common in the speech of young Spaniards and seem to be spreading.

20.3.10 Main clauses that express emotional reactions or value judgements require the subjunctive in the subordinate clause

In standard Spanish, the subjunctive is used in sentences of the pattern emotional reaction or value judgement + *que* + subordinate verb. 'Emotional reaction' and 'value judgement' cover a vast range of possibilities including regret, pleasure, displeasure, blaming, praise, criticism, surprise, understanding, toleration, agreement, excuse, rejection, justification, statements of sufficiency, insufficiency and importance, etc. Examples:

Es natural que esté alterada	It's natural for her to be upset
Que te protejan no está mal (ABV, Sp., dialogue)	It's not a bad thing that they protect you
No aguanto que me hablen de esa manera	I can't stand them talking to me like that
Basta que te ofrezcan mucho dinero para que de repente no sepas ni para qué sirve	You only need to be offered a lot of money to suddenly realize that you don't even know what use it is
Estoy hasta el moño de que tengamos que ser siempre nosotras las que debamos recoger la mesa (CRG, Sp.)	I'm sick to death that it's always us women who have to clear the table
Andrés era el culpable de que me pasaran todas esas cosas (AM, Mex., dialogue)	It was Andrés's fault that all these things were happening to me
Que la locomotora arrancara emocionó a Lorenzo (EP, Mex.)	Lorenzo was excited by the locomotive starting up
Yo sentía mucho que pensaras/pensases eso	I was really sorry you thought that
Están de acuerdo en que los militares entreguen sus armas	They agree that the troops should hand in their weapons

(1) Important: one must differentiate between value judgements 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', *afirma/pretende que . . .* '(s)he claims that . . .'. The latter require the indicative when they are not negated, even though the distinction may not always be obvious to English speakers, especially when they notice that *ser natural que* 'to be natural that' takes the subjunctive whereas *quejarse de que* 'to complain that' usually takes the indicative. For negative statements like 'it is *not* true that . . .', which require the subjunctive, see 20.3.15.

(2) Some impersonal forms of verbs denoting value judgements or emotional reactions require the infinitive when their *indirect* object and the subject of the following verb are the same, as in *¿te importa hacer menos ruido?* 'do you mind making less noise' or *nos gusta comer mejillones* 'we like eating mussels'. Similar verbs are: *afligir* 'to afflict', *agobiar* 'to oppress/overwhelm', *agradecer* 'to thank for', *alarmar* 'to alarm', *alegrar* 'to cheer up', *apetecer* as in *me apetece hacerlo* 'I feel like doing it', *bastar* as in *te basta con decir gracias* 'all you have to do is say thanks', *conmover* 'to move' (emotionally), *convenir* as in *me conviene hacerlo mañana* 'it suits me to do it tomorrow', *costar* 'to be hard work', *disgustar* 'to displease', *doler* 'to hurt', *fastidiar* 'to annoy', *interesar* 'to be of interest'/'to be advantageous', *preocupar* 'to worry', *sorprender* 'to surprise', etc.

(3) Most other verbs take the infinitive when the subjects refer to the same person or thing, as in (*yo*) *odio hablar en público* 'I hate speaking in public'. Similar are: *aceptar* 'to accept', *avenirse a* 'to agree to', *conformarse con* 'to agree with/accept', *consentir en* 'to consent to', *contentarse con* 'to be content to', *deplorar* 'to deplore, *lamentar* 'to lament', *resignarse a* 'to be resigned to', *soportar/aguantar* 'to put up with', etc. (based on *GDLE* 36.3.2.3).

A fuller list of infinitive constructions appears at 22.2.2.

(4) Note the different meanings of *sentir*: *siento que se me* ***ha*** *dormido el brazo* 'I feel that my arm has gone to sleep' (physical sensation), *siento que se te* ***haya*** *dormido el brazo* 'I'm *sorry* your arm's gone to sleep' (emotional reaction).

(5) *Menos mal que* 'it's a good thing that', takes the indicative even though it is obviously a value judgement: *menos mal que estaba presente la mujer de Maximino* (RC, Sp., dialogue) 'it's a good thing Maximino's wife was there', *menos mal que tú y yo estábamos acostumbradas a la niebla* (SG, Mex., dialogue) 'it's a good thing the two of us were used to the fog'.

Qué bien que and *qué bueno que* take the subjunctive in Spain: *qué bien que haya venido Tito* 'it's great/good news that Tito's come'. In Latin America, they may appear with the indicative: *qué bueno que está bien* (EM., Mex., dialogue) 'it's great that he's okay'.

(6) 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* 'we'd better leave it until later', *¿le cuento lo de los otros tres novios o mejor lo dejamos ahí?* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'should I tell you about the other three boyfriends or would it be better to leave it there?' Compare *sería mejor que lo dejáramos/dejásemos para más tarde* 'it would be better if we left it until later, (*es*) *mejor que lo dejemos* 'best we leave it until later'.

(7) 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 wonderful if there were no hunger in the world'.

(8) **Important**: 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*!'

20.3.11 Some unexpected exceptions to the rule stated in the previous section

In spontaneous language in Latin America, and to a lesser extent in Spain, an emotional reaction or value judgement referring to a past, present or habitual event may take the indicative in the subordinate clause. Some speakers accept *me alegra/molesta que estás aquí* 'I'm glad/annoyed you're here', other speakers require . . . *estés aquí*. This tendency to use the indicative is rather stronger with verbs followed by *de que*: see 20.3.12.

The indicative is sometimes seen in writing in Latin America, especially in Argentina. Examples:

El innegable genio de Joyce era puramente verbal; lástima que lo ***gastó*** *en la novela* (JLB, Arg.)	Joyce's undeniable genius was purely verbal; a pity that he wasted it on the novel
Es curioso que uno no ***puede*** *estar sin encariñarse con algo* (MP, Arg., dialogue)	It's strange that one can't manage (lit. 'can't be') without getting fond of something
Me da lástima que ***terminó*** (ibid., dialogue)	I'm sorry it's ended
Me parece raro que este hombre ***baja y dice*** *"Mire . . ."* (Ven., quoted DeMello, 1996, (2), 367)	It seems strange to me that this man gets out and says 'Look . . .'

(1) DeMello's (1996, 2) study of recordings from Hispanic capital cities suggests that colloquial Spanish tends to distinguish between value judgements accompanied by emotional reactions (subjunctive) and value judgements that simply inform the speaker of a fact (indicative). But he notes that whereas the indicative was found in 57 per cent of Latin-American sentences involving value judgements, it occurred in only 36 per cent in Spain. Literary language strongly prefers the subjunctive after all value judgements + *que*.

20.3.12 Emotions and value judgements followed by *de que*

We said at 20.3.10 that the subjunctive is used with expressions of emotion and value judgements + *que*. But when the verb is followed by ***de que*** the indicative mood is sometimes heard in relaxed speech when the verb is in the present or past. This tendency should probably not be imitated by foreign students:

Me alegré de que (*pensaban*)/*pensaran pensasen hacerlo*	I was glad that they intended to do it
Se indignaba de que sus suegros (*creían*)/*creyeran*/*creyesen en la pena de muerte*	(S)he was outraged that his/her in-laws believed in the death penalty
Se asombra de que todo el mundo tiene un ticket (quoted DeMello, 1996 (2), 367. Madrid speech)	(S)he's surprised everyone's got a ticket

(1) As mentioned earlier, *quejarse de que* 'to complain that . . .' seems to foreign learners to be an emotional reaction, but it is followed by the indicative: *se queja de que Berta la hace quedarse a dormir la siesta* (MP, Arg., dialogue) 'she complains about Berta making her stay in to sleep in the afternoon', *siempre se quejaba de que debía ir a misa y confesarse* (EM, Mex., dialogue) 'he was always complaining that he had to go to Mass and confess'.

20.3.13 *Lamentar que, protestar de que, sentir que* and other verbs whose meaning changes when a following verb is in the subjunctive

Lamentar que 'to regret the fact that' takes the subjunctive. *Lamentarse de que* 'to lament/regret the fact that . . .' takes the subjunctive when it expresses an emotional reaction and the indicative when it merely makes a statement: compare *lamento que se haya tomado molestias* (JM, Sp., dialogue) 'I'm sorry that you've been bothered' and *renunció el 5 de enero de 1853, lamentándose de que entre nosotros los males sociales son orgánicos* (*Historia general de México*, Mex.) 'he resigned on 5 January 1853, regretting (the fact that) that social evils are deep-rooted among us'.

Protestar de que 'to protest that' takes either mood: *protestaba de que el gobierno había/hubiera/hubiese subido los impuestos* '(s)he was protesting at/lamenting the fact that the Government had raised taxes'. For *sentir que* see 20.3.10 note 4.

(1) Other verbs of variable meaning are:

	with indicative	**with subjunctive**
comprobar que	to note that	to make sure that
denunciar que	to report (e.g. to police) that	to denounce the fact that
garantizar que	to guarantee that	to ensure that
soñar que	to dream (while asleep) that	to dream (i.e. yearn) that
ver que	to see/observe that	to see to it that
verificar que	to note/confirm that	to check/make sure that

See 20.3.22 for *comprender que*, *entender que*, *explicar que*, *aceptar que*

20.3.14 *Lo* + emotional reactions + *que*

If a value judgement is expressed by a phrase involving the 'neuter article' *lo*, the rule for the use of the subjunctive is as follows:

(**a**) *Lo lógico es que . . ./lo normal es que . . ./lo habitual/corriente es que . . .* are followed by a subjunctive:

Lo lógico/lo normal/lo habitual es que no ***venga***	The logical thing/the normal thing is that he doesn't come
En nuestro país, lo habitual es que en todo asunto en que una persona pobre reclama de algún abuso . . . ***termine*** *con problemas mayores que aquellos por los cuales reclama* (*La Época*, Ch.)	In our country, it's usual that in any matter in which a poor person complains about some abuse, they end up with worse problems than the ones they are complaining about

(**b**) *Lo peor es que/lo mejor es que . . ./lo malo es que . . ./lo terrible es que . . ./lo molesto es que . . .*, etc., can be problematic for English speakers. They are followed by the subjunctive when they clearly express an emotional reaction or value judgement, especially about some future event:

Lo peor será/es que no venga nadie	The worst thing will be if no one comes
Lo malo sería que no terminaran/terminasen el trabajo a tiempo	The problem would be if they didn't finish the work on time
Lo más provocante de la ley es que provoque una reacción violenta del gobierno cubano (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	The most provocative thing about the law is that it may produce a violent reaction from the Cuban government

But they take the indicative when they refer to some present or past fact:

Lo peor fue que no vino nadie	The worst thing was that no one came
Lo que me indigna es que la sociedad todavía condena los amores o amoríos entre una señora madura y un jovencito (CRG, Sp.)	What makes me mad is that society still condemns romances or love affairs between a mature woman and a young man
Lo que más me sorprendió . . . fue que . . . se habían detenido y vuelto (JM, Sp.)	What surprised me most was that they had stopped and turned round
Lo malo es que soñé nuevamente con Emilio (MB, Ur., dialogue)	The worst is that I dreamt of Emilio again
Lo que me extraña es que no me di cuenta (GZ, Mex., dialogue)	What puzzles me is that I didn't realize

(1) English speakers usually fail to see the difference between the indicative and the subjunctive in the examples listed above under **(b)**. Compare *lo malo es que tenemos el examen a las cuatro* 'the worst thing is that we've got the exam at four o'clock' (statement of fact) and *lo malo es que tengamos el examen a las cuatro* (expresses an emotional reaction and means something like 'unfortunately we've got the exam at four o'clock', or 'we've got the exam at four, worst luck').

(2) Spanish-speakers who will not accept sentences like ?*es curioso que dices eso* 'it's odd that you should say that' (for *digas*) will often accept *lo curioso es que dices eso*'.

20.3.15 When the main clause denies something the subordinate verb is in the subjunctive

Examples:

*No creo que **sea** posible*	I don't think it's possible
Mayta negó que hubiera intervenido en el rapto (MVLl, Pe., dialogue); or *hubiese*	Mayta denied he was involved in the kidnapping
Yo no he dicho que seas una histérica (CRG, Sp., dialogue)	I didn't say you were a hysteric
Esto no significa que haya que esperar un cambio radical de actitud (JC, Arg.)	This doesn't mean that one must expect a radical change of attitude
No ocurre/sucede que haya eclipse todos los días	It doesn't happen that there's an eclipse every day
No se trata de que tengas que quedarte todos los días hasta las nueve de la noche	It's not a question of your having to stay till nine p.m. every day
Pero eso no indica que se vaya a dar una crisis (*Excélsior*, Mex.)	But that doesn't show that there is going to be a crisis
No es verdad que existan las hadas	It isn't true that fairies exist

(1) Statements containing imperatives like 'don't think that', 'don't believe that' usually take the indicative: *no digas que es verdad* 'don't say that it's true', *no creas que esto es lo único que hacemos* 'don't think that this is the only thing we do' (AM, Mex., dialogue).

(2) The subjunctive is sometimes optional after negated verbs of knowing or believing, depending on the degree of uncertainty involved. If one knows for a fact that X is a thief, one says *no confesaba que había robado el dinero* '(s)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, negated statements of observable truths, e.g. *yo no sabía que la puerta estaba abierta* 'I didn't know the door was open'

(it was) are more likely to take the indicative although *estuviera/estuviese* is also correct. Negated opinions, e.g. *no creo que sea muy útil* 'I don't think it's very useful', are almost certain to take the subjunctive.

As the *NGLE* 25.7g points out, this distinction is not applied rigidly. It quotes *si sujetas con la mano un vaso con agua fresca, al cabo de cierto tiempo no notas que el agua* ***esté*** *fresca* 'if you hold a glass of cool water in your hand, after a while you don't notice that the water is cool'. In this case the water obviously *is* cool. This example is a reminder of how difficult it is to formulate binding rules about the Spanish subjunctive.

(3) 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*, Mex., usually *hubiera*, *hubiese* or *haya habido bronca*) 'I deny there was a row', *pero negaban tozudamente que transportaban marihuana en esta ocasión* (*Granma*, Cu.) 'but they stubbornly denied that they were carrying marihuana on this occasion', *rechaza que Dios existe* (from Navas Ruiz (1986), 69, usually *exist**a***) '(s)he denies that God exists'. The negative of *negar* amounts to an assertion of the truth so it often takes the indicative: *nadie podía negar que él siempre cumplía con su palabra* (GM, Sp.) 'no one could deny that he always kept his word'. But the subjunctive is also common: *no negaban que unas Cortes pudieran ser benéficas para la monarquía, siempre y cuando se limitaran a representar los intereses de los súbditos* (*Historia general de México*, Mex.) 'they did not deny that a Parliament could be beneficial for the monarchy provided it limited itself to representing the citizens' interests'.

(4) *No ser que* and *no que . . .* are denials and are normally followed by the subjunctive: *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* (JM, Sp.) 'it isn't that important (lit. 'great') things were said', *no era que no hubiese pobres por toda la ciudad* (AM, Mex.) 'it wasn't that there were no poor people all over the city'.

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, Sp.) 'it wasn't that he was taking possession of the world'. *No ser que* takes the indicative in questions: see next section.

(5) For the formula *no sea que* 'lest'/'so that not . . .' see 20.4.3b.

(6) *Poco . . .* may also take the subjunctive in sentences like *pocas personas creen que existan/existen los fantasmas* 'few people believe ghosts exist', *poca gente acepta que sea/es inocente* 'few people accept that (s)he's innocent'. There is little difference between the subjunctive and the indicative in these cases.

20.3.16 Main clause consists of a negative question or order

Negative questions and negative orders are not denials, 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? (JI, Mex., dialogue)	Don't you feel your heart getting bigger when you see this?

(1) For the Latin-American, especially Mexican, use of the subjunctive in positive questions, e.g. *¿crees que* ***sea*** *verdad?*, Spain *¿crees que* ***es*** *verdad?* see 20.12.1.

20.3.17 Main clause contains a statement of doubt

Dudar que 'to doubt that . . .' takes the subjunctive, but after *no dudar que* 'not to doubt that . . .' the indicative is normally used when the meaning is 'to be sure that . . .':

Dudo que sea verdad	I doubt whether it's true
No dudo que sea verdad lo que dices	I don't doubt whether what you say is true (tentative remark)
No dudo que es verdad lo que dices	I don't doubt (i.e. 'I'm convinced') that what you say is true
No dudo que irá/vaya	I don't doubt he'll go
No hay duda que ella puede ser discutida (MVLl, Pe., Sp. *no hay duda de que . . .*)	There's no doubt that it [the claim: *la afirmación*] can be debated
No dudé que el adjetivo "perfecta" era el único que le convenía (JV, Mex., dialogue)	I didn't doubt that the adjective 'perfect' was the only one appropriate for her

(1) For *dudar* ***de*** *que* see 37.4.3 note 2.

20.3.18 Statements of fear + *que*

Temer, *tener miedo de que* 'to fear/be afraid of' and other statements of similar meaning may take a subjunctive or an indicative tense, in the latter case most often a future form, or, if they refer to the past, a future in the past:

Temo que le moleste/Temo que le va a molestar/molestará/le vaya a molestar	I'm afraid it may bother him/her
Temíamos que le molestara/molestase/molestaría/Temíamos que le iba/fuera a molestar	We were afraid it would bother him/her
Yo tenía miedo de que te hubieras ido (GCI, Cu., dialogue)	I was scared that you'd gone
. . . para no ver el mar por la escotilla porque nos da miedo de que entre (EP, Mex.)	. . . so as not to see the sea through the hatch because we're afraid it'll come in

The subjunctive is always used if the main verb is negated: *no temía que me fuera/fuese a atacar* 'I wasn't afraid he/she/it was going to attack me'.

(1) *Temer que* may also be found with the indicative when it refers to timeless or habitual actions: *temo que la verdadera frontera la trae cada uno dentro* (CF, Mex., dialogue) 'I fear that each one of us carries the real frontier inside ourselves', *empezaba a temer que las imágenes de los dos mundos . . . pertenecían a dos caras de la misma moneda* (JA, Sp.) 'I was beginning to fear that the images of the two worlds . . . belonged to two sides of the same coin'.

(2) *Temerse que* usually means little more than 'I'm sorry to say that . . .' and it then 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* (LS, Ch., dialogue) 'I'm afraid I can't talk to you about that'. But the subjunctive is also possible, in which case it tends to mean 'to fear that' rather than 'to suspect that': *mucho nos tememos que se trate de los primeros* (*Terra*, Ur.) 'we are very much afraid that the former are involved'.

20.3.19 Main clause means 'the fact that . . .'

There are several 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 generally used whenever the phrase meaning 'the fact that . . .' appears at the head of a sentence:

El hecho de que seas protegido de los Valdés me tiene sin cuidado (EM, Mex., dialogue)	The fact that you're someone protected by the Valdéses leaves me cold
(*El*) *que no digan nada no debería afectar tu decisión*	The fact that they say nothing shouldn't affect your decision
El que yo escriba un diario se debe también a Virginia (JJA, Mex., dialogue.)	The fact that I keep a diary is also due to Virginia

(**b**) The indicative is often used when the main verb is a verb of knowing or perceiving (e.g. *enterarse de* 'to find out', *darse cuenta de* 'to realize'). When *el hecho de que* is preceded by a preposition it almost always takes the indicative:

Se ha dado cuenta (*del hecho*) *de que tiene que trabajar para vivir*	(S)he has realized (s)he has to work in order to live
. . . parten del hecho de que muchos mayores tienen dificultades para usar correctamente los aparatos (*El Mundo*, Sp.)	. . . are based on the fact that many elderly persons find it difficult to use the devices [computers] correctly
No sé si influiría el hecho de que era medio danesa y que al parecer hizo allí parte de sus estudios (LS, Sp., dialogue)	I don't know whether the fact she was half Danish and apparently did part of her studies there would have any influence
. . . como corrobora el hecho de que sus principales discos seguían reeditándose (JA, Mex.)	. . . as is confirmed by the fact that his main records/disks continued to be published

(1) *El que* 'the fact that' must be distinguished from *el que* 'the person that' (discussed at 40.1.4). 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 (s)he's talking about', *el que haya dicho eso no tiene importancia* 'the fact that (s)he said that has no importance'.

(2) English speakers tend to overdo *el hecho de que* for 'the fact that'. *El que . . .* or *que . . .* alone are as common, if not more so.

(3) For *de ahí que* 'hence the fact that . . .' see 20.2.6.

20.3.20 Subjunctive after noun phrases + *de que*

When a noun phrase replaces a verb phrase it is usually connected to a following subordinate clause by ***de*** *que*: compare *esperamos que llueva* 'we hope it will rain' and *la esperanza* ***de*** *que llueva* 'the hope that it will rain': see 37.4.2 for a more detailed discussion of the use of *de que* after nouns.

(1) For the tendency to drop the *de* in this construction, see 37.4.2 note 1.

20.3.21 Subjunctive after *creer, parecer, suponer* and *sospechar* + *que*

We said at 20.3.3b that expressions of belief + *que* take the indicative – *creo que Dios existe* 'I believe that God exists', *dice que sospechó que todo iba a terminar muy mal* (MS, Mex.) 'he says he suspected that everything was going to end really badly'– unless they are negated: *no creo que Dios exista* 'I don't believe God exists', *no me parece que haya nada malo en eso* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'it doesn't seem to me that there's anything bad about that'.

However, the subjunctive occasionally appears after *parecer que . . .* and – very rarely – after *sospechar que . . .* 'to suspect that . . .' even when they are not negative. The meaning is then more hesitant or implies that what follows is not true; but the difference can barely be translated into English:

Sospecho que es/sea mentira	I suspect it's a lie
Como si la Historia fuera una especie de saltamontes; y parece que lo sea (AS, Sp.)	As if History were a sort of grasshopper and it seems that it is
¿Por qué estás así? Parece que te estuvieras ahogando (ABE, Pe., dialogue)	Why are you like that? It looks as though you were drowning
. . . una de esas veces . . . en que parece que hubiera explotado una bomba en alguna parte muy, muy remota (MS, Mex.)	. . . one of those times when it seems that a bomb had exploded somewhere far, far away

In other words, *parece que es así* tends to mean 'it seems that' implying 'and it is', and *parece que sea así* suggests 'it looks that way' but it may not be.

(1) Use of the subjunctive to make a question ironic (i.e. when the speaker already knows the answer, as *¿crees realmente que esto ayud**e**?* 'do you *really* think this helps?') is much more common in Latin America than in Spain. See 20.12.1 in the Appendix to this chapter.

(2) *No saber si . . .* often takes the subjunctive from Colombia northwards, including Mexico. See 20.12.1 note 1.

(3) *Parecer* + subjunctive can sometimes mean 'to seem OK' in questions in Spain, but less often in Latin America: *¿te parece que vayamos a un restaurante chino?* 'how about we go/what if we go to a Chinese restaurant?', more usually *¿qué te parece si vamos . . .?*

20.3.22 Subjunctive after *comprender/entender que, explicar que, aceptar 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*, Sp.) 'I don't understand why people are asking me now about the written statement'.

Comprender que, entender que and *aceptar que* usually take the subjunctive when they mean 'to sympathize with':

Comprendo que mucha gente en la comunidad afroestadounidense pudiera no entender eso (interview, *La Jornada*, Mex.)	I understand that a lot of people in the US Afro-American community may not understand that
También aceptó que el Parlamento francés examine el pacto (*El País*, Sp.)	He also accepted that the French parliament should examine the agreement
Acepto que no quieras ir con nosotros	I accept that you don't want to go with us

But *comprendo/entiendo/acepto que la situación es así* 'I realize/accept that this is the situation' take the indicative: *comprendo que esta noticia carece totalmente de importancia* (interview, *La Jornada*, Mex.) 'I understand/accept that this news is totally lacking in importance'.

(1) *Explicar* usually takes the indicative when it really means 'to state' or 'to say': *Javier explicó que había estado enfermo* 'Javier explained that he had been ill'. But the subjunctive is used when the verb means 'gives the reason why': *esto explica que las mutaciones de la literatura estén estrechamente ligadas a las innovaciones técnicas* 'this explains that changes in literature are intimately linked to technical innovations', *eso explica que estemos de buen humor* 'that explains why we're in a good mood'.

20.3.23 Subjunctive after *esperar que*

Esperar 'to hope', and the noun *la esperanza de que* . . . 'the hope that', may be followed by the subjunctive, by the future indicative, by the conditional tense or by the indicative of *ir a*. The subjunctive is by far the commonest form when the verb means 'to hope'. Use of the indicative of these tenses suggests the meaning 'to expect':

Espero que lo/le convenzas/convencerás	I hope/expect you'll convince him
. . . con la esperanza de que ella haría lo mismo (CF, Mex., dialogue)	. . . with 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 (SP, Mex.)	For a moment she was filled with the hope that her husband no longer inhabited the realm of the living
Espero que no se le ocurra meterse por mitad del caño que hay entre las piedras (APR, Sp., dialogue)	I hope he doesn't get the idea of sailing through the channel between the rocks
Espero que me vas a pagar	I'm expecting that you're going to pay me

(1) *Esperar a que* and *aguardar a que* 'to wait for . . .' take the subjunctive: *yo estaba esperando/aguardando a que lo hiciera/hiciese otra persona* 'I was waiting for someone else to do it'.

(2) *Esperar* must be used with an infinitive when the two subjects are the same: *yo esperaba hacerlo* 'I was hoping to do it', but *yo esperaba que él lo hiciera/hiciese* 'I was hoping he'd do it'.

(3) *No esperar*(*se*) *que* takes the subjunctive: *yo no* (*me*) *esperaba que me fuera a escribir* 'I didn't expect (s)he was going to write to me'. The form *esperar**se*** emphasizes surprise.

20.4 The subjunctive in subordinate clauses introduced by subordinators other than *que*

20.4.1 Introductory

The subordinators discussed in Section 20.4 are words like 'when', 'after', 'because', 'unless', which introduce subordinate clauses. The general rule governing the use of the subjunctive after such subordinators is: if the event referred to in the subordinate clause has or had already occurred, the subordinate verb is in the indicative. If the event has or had not yet occurred, the verb is in the subjunctive. Example:

Te lo di cuando llegaste	I gave it to you when you arrived
*Te lo daré cuando llegu**es***	I'll give it to you when you arrive
*Yo iba a dártelo cuando lleg**aras**/lleg**ases***	I was going to give it to you when you arrived

Timeless or habitual actions also take the indicative: *oscurece cuando se **pone** el sol* 'it gets dark when the sun sets', *mi nieta siempre me da un beso en cuanto **llega*** 'my granddaughter always gives me a kiss as soon as she arrives'.

It follows from this that some subordinators, e.g. *antes de que* 'before', *para que/a que* 'in order that', *a condición de que* 'on condition that' always take the subjunctive because they must refer to something that has or had not yet happened at the time of the main clause. But in most cases use of the subjunctive depends on the rule given in the first paragraph of this section.

As in English, 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'.

(1) Important: **t**he rules given here do not refer to question words like *cuándo*, *dónde*, *cómo*, *quién*, *cuál*, which are not subordinating conjunctions and are best thought of as separate words. They are followed by the indicative: *¿sabes cuándo llega**a**?* 'do you know when (s)he's coming?', *¿te acordarás de dónde lo **has** dejado?* 'will you remember where you've left it?', *dudo que sepa cómo se **dice*** 'I doubt (s)he knows how to say it'. Compare also *¿y cu**á**ndo te casas?* 'and when are you getting married?' and *¿y cuando te cas**e**s qué va a ser de tus hijos?* 'and when you get married what's going to happen to your children?'

20.4.2 Use of the infinitive after subordinators

The infinitive is used after certain subordinators when both verbs have the same subject. Compare *entré sin verla* 'I came in without seeing her' (same subject: 'I') and *entré sin que ella me viera/viese* 'I came in without her seeing me' (different subjects). This occurs with the following subordinators:

(a) Those that include the word *de*, e.g. *con tal de que* 'provided that', *antes de que*, 'before', *después de que* 'after', *bajo la condición de que* 'on condition that', *con el objeto de que/a fin de que* 'with the intention of', *a cambio de que* 'in return for', *en vez de que* 'instead of', *a pesar de que* 'despite', *en caso de que* 'in the event of', *el hecho de que* 'the fact that', etc. The *que* is dropped before the infinitive:

Lo haré antes/después de salir	I'll do it before/after I go out
Muchos lo consultaban antes de tomar decisiones políticas (JA, Mex.)	Many people consulted him before taking political decisions
Lo escribió con el objeto de alabar a sus compañeros de trabajo	(S)he wrote it with the intention of praising his/her work colleagues
El hecho de saber cuatro lenguas me ayuda	The fact of knowing four languages helps me

(**b**) *Sin que* 'without', *para que/a que* 'in order to', *nada más* 'as soon as', *hasta que* 'until'

The *que* is dropped before an infinitive. Compare: *entré sin hacer ruido* 'I came in without making any noise', *entré sin que me viera/viese* 'I came in without him/her seeing me'; *fue al dentista a que le sacara/sacase una muela* '(s)he went to the dentist for him to take one of her/his teeth out' and *fui al supermercado a comprar pan* 'I went to the supermarket to buy bread'. In the case of the other subordinators, e.g. *cuando*, *mientras* 'while', *en cuanto/una vez que* 'as soon as', a subordinate finite verb cannot be replaced by an infinitive: *te lo diré cuando te vea* 'I'll tell you when I see you', never **te lo diré cuando verte*, which is not Spanish.

(1) Some of these subordinators that allow the infinitive construction are found with an infinitive in very informal speech even when the subjects are not the same, as in ?*cómprame unas postales para mandárselas* (*yo*) *a mi madre* for *cómprame unas postales para que yo se las mande a mi madre* 'buy me some postcards for me to send to my mother', *te voy a ver antes de irte ¿no?* (for . . . *antes de que te vayas*) 'I'm going to see you before you go, aren't I?' This kind of construction is quite common in spontaneous informal speech but it is avoided in careful language.

(2) For *porque* when it means 'in order to' (it usually means 'because') see 20.4.3 note 1.

20.4.3 Subjunctive with subordinators of purpose: 'in order to', 'so that', etc.

(**a**) Phrases meaning 'in order to' such as *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* (which also has other meanings, e.g. *a que sí* 'I bet it's true'), are always followed by a subjunctive because they obviously point to an event that has

or had not yet happened at the time of the main clause. When the subjects of the verbs are identical the infinitive is used, e.g. *lo hice para fastidiarte* 'I did it to annoy you'; see 20.4.2:

Afuera, para que la solidaridad se sienta, hay que reunir un millar de personas (MB, Ur., dialogue. Sp. *Fuera . . .*)	Outside, so that people should sense the (level of) solidarity, we need to assemble about a thousand people
La enorme fuerza que cobraba la derecha fue determinante para que el presidente eligiera sucesor (JA, Mex.)	The enormous strength the political Right was acquiring was what decided the President to choose a successor
He escrito una circular a fin de que se enteren todos	I've written a circular so that everyone knows about it
Debemos esforzarnos porque/para que los demás tengan menos trabajo	We should make an effort so that the others have less work
Estoy un tanto apurado y como impaciente porque pase el trago	I'm a bit worried and rather impatient for this unpleasantness to pass.

(**b**) A number of phrases express negative intention or avoidance, i.e. 'so that not', and they always take the subjunctive. They are awkward to translate now that our word 'lest' is confined to formal styles. These phrases do not allow replacement of the subjunctive by an infinitive:

Trabaja más, no sea que te despidan	Work harder so they don't fire you
Me subí al coche en tres minutos no se me fuera a arrepentir de la invitación (AM, Mex., dialogue)	I got into the car within three minutes lest he regretted/so that he wouldn't regret the invitation
No corras tanto, no vaya a darte un infarto	Don't rush (lit. 'run') so much – you don't want to give yourself a heart attack
No vaya a ser que los secuestradores se den cuenta (EM, Mex., dialogue)	We don't want the kidnappers to find out
Devuélveles el dinero, no ocurra que nos demanden	Give them back the money. We don't want them to sue us

(1) *Porque* in the meaning 'in order that' is less common than *para que*, but is quite often found after certain verbs, especially *esforzarse porque/para que* + subjunctive 'to make an effort in order to . . .'. For the difference between *por* and *para* when both mean 'in order to', see 38.17.16.

20.4.4 Subjunctive with subordinators meaning 'because', 'seeing that', etc.

These do not allow replacement of the finite verb by an infinitive.

(**a**) The following are followed by the indicative when they mean 'since' or 'because':

pues because (see 37.5.3) *ya que* since/seeing that	*debido a que* due to the fact that
comoquiera que since *puesto que* since	*en vista de que* seeing that

(b) ***Como***, when it means 'because' or 'since' (i.e. 'in view of the fact that . . .') is also usually followed by the indicative; it is discussed at 37.5.2. When followed by the subjunctive *como* may mean 'if' and is discussed at 29.8.2. For the use of *como* in sentences like *hazlo como quieras* 'do it as/how you like', see 20.5.2. *Cómo* means 'how' in direct and indirect questions, and is best thought of as a different word: see 28.7.

Invítame ya que/puesto que tienes tanto dinero/ Como tienes tanto dinero me puedes invitar (in this meaning *como* must appear at the head of the clause; see 37.5.2)	Since you have so much money you can pay for me
Comoquiera que los perros no leen debía de estar ahí el letrero para que lo leyera la gente (*comoquiera* for 'since' is literary)	Since dogs can't read, the notice must have been there for people to read

(c) ***Porque*** is usually followed by an indicative, but it requires the subjunctive when it means 'just because'/'only because', and after *no porque* 'not because'. Sometimes it can be preceded by *solo/sólo.*

No lo hago porque tú lo digas	I'm not doing it just because *you* say so
Que nadie venga a nosotros porque piense que va a obtener enchufes	Let no one come to us (just) because they think that they'll get special favours
. . . no tanto porque fuera imprescindible su aval (JA, Mex.)	. . . not so much because his approval was absolutely necessary
Me perdí y llegué tarde. No porque yo me oriente mal, sino porque iba un poco sonada (CMG, Sp., dialogue)	I lost my way and was late. Not because I have a poor sense of direction but because I was a bit stoned,

But:

No lo hago porque tú lo dices	I'm not doing it because you say I should
No lo hago solo/sólo porque tú lo dices	I'm doing it, but not simply because you're telling me to
No salgo contigo solo/sólo porque tienes un Ferrari	The fact that you have a Ferrari isn't the only reason I go out with you

Spanish can thus avoid an important ambiguity that affects English sentences like 'he didn't react because he was tired'. See 20.11.

(d) The subjunctive is used after *bien porque . . . o, ya . . . ya . . . /ya porque . . . o, fuera porque . . . fuera porque* 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
. . . ya fuese para apuntalar al Gobierno, ya para atacarlo (*Abc Color*, Par.)	. . . whether in order to support the government, or to attack it
Fuera porque no sea costumbre de los arrabales estadounidenses, fuera porque a nadie le interesara demasiado su vida . . . (SP, Sp. . . . *bien porque . . . o porque* could have been used)	Whether because it wasn't usual in the suburbs in the USA, or because her life didn't interest anyone too much . . .
Me gusta, ya sea idea de Pedro, ya sea de otro	I like it, whether it's Pedro's idea or someone else's

(e) ***Dado que*** usually takes the indicative: . . . *dado que los resultados del peritaje ponían en riesgo la veracidad del caso* (AH, Mex.) '. . . since the results of the experts' report threatened [to undermine] the truth of the case'. But it may imply 'assuming it is the case that . . .' and take the subjunctive: *dado que sea verdad lo que dices, cuenta con mi aprobación y ayuda* (DRAE) 'assuming what you say is true, count on my approval and help'.

(1) For *porque* in the meaning of 'in order that . . .' see 20.4.3.

20.4.5 Subjunctive with subordinators of result, aim and manner, e.g. 'as a result'

These are words meaning 'so'/'as a result' in sentences like 'it was snowing, so we stayed at home'. They do not allow replacement of the finite verb by an infinitive.

(**a**) When they indicate the result of an action the following take the indicative:

así que so (= 'as a result')	*de manera que* in such a way that/so
conque so (esp. in questions, e.g. *¿conque lo has hecho tú?* 'so it was you that did it?')	*de suerte que* in such a way that/so
	de forma/modo que in such a way
Tú tienes la culpa, de modo que/así que/conque no te puedes quejar	You're to blame, so you can't complain
El río Niágara sigue fluyendo debajo de la capa de hielo, de modo que las cataratas no están totalmente congeladas (*Excélsior*, Mex.)	The Niagara river is still flowing underneath the ice layer, so the falls are not completely frozen

If they indicate aim or purpose they take the subjunctive: *iban disfrazados de manera que nadie los/les reconociera/reconociese* 'they were in disguise so (i.e. 'with the intention that . . .') no one would recognize them'; . . . *de manera que nadie los/les reconoció* implies result, i.e. that no one *did* recognize them. This avoids another ambiguity of English – see 20.11. Further examples implying aim or intention:

Compórtate de modo/manera que no sospechen	Behave so as to avoid them suspecting
—Está sobreactuando —me dijo a mí en el pasillo, de forma que nuestra madre no le pudiera oír (SP, Sp.)	'She's overacting,' he said to me in the corridor so that our mother wouldn't hear him
. . . procurando colocar la cámara de tal manera que mi rostro . . . no estropeara la foto (ES, Mex., dialogue)	. . . trying to position the camera so that my face wouldn't spoil the photo

(**b**) ***Como*** when it means 'as'/'however' requires the subjunctive when it refers to an action which is or was still in the future:

Hazlo como quieras	Do it however you like
Te dije que podías venir como quisieras/quisieses	I told you that you could come any way you liked

When it refers to a present or past action, the indicative is used: *lo hacen como siempre lo han hecho sus madres* 'they do it as their mothers have always done', *lo hice como quise* 'I did it the way I wanted to'.

For *como* + subjunctive meaning 'if' see 29.8.2; for *como* meaning 'as' (i.e. 'seeing that') see 37.5.2.

(**c**) ***Cual si*** (literary: see 28.3.1 note 3) and ***como si*** 'as if' always take a past subjunctive, but never a present subjunctive. For *como si* = 'just as if'/'it's just the same as when', see note 2:

Me miró como si no me viera/viese	(S)he looked at me as if (s)he couldn't/didn't see me
Las trató con gran familiaridad, como si las viera todos los días (CF, Mex.)	He treated them very familiarly, as though he saw them every day

(1) *Comme si* takes the indicative in French: *comme si elle avait quinze ans* = *como si* ***tuviera/tuviese*** *quince años* 'as if she was fifteen years old'.

(2) *Hacer que* 'to pretend that', *hacer como si/que* 'to act as if' and *ser como si* 'to be as if . . .' take the indicative when they mean the same as *como cuando . . .* '. . . the same as when . . .': *Marta hace que no escucha* 'Marta pretends not to be listening', *hicieron como si no se enteraban* (SP, Sp.) 'they acted as if they didn't realize', *hizo como que no entendía* '(s)he pretended not to understand', *es como si/como cuando no puedes respirar y te asustas* 'it's the same as when you can't breathe and you get scared', *el niño pasa de todo, como si le llevo a una manifestación en favor del divorcio o contra los bocadillos de calamares* (MVM, Sp., dialogue) 'my little boy doesn't worry about a thing: it's the same to him whether I take him on a demonstration in support of divorce or against squid sandwiches'.

(3) *Como si . . .* is 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"'.

(4) *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, Sp.) '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').

(5) *Como que*, which can also mean 'as if', takes the indicative: *últimamente lo he venido notando preocupado, como que desea comunicarme algo* (JJA, Mex., dialogue) 'lately I've been noticing that he's preoccupied, as if he wants to tell me something'.

20.4.6 Subjunctive with words meaning 'in case', 'supposing that'

En caso de que and *en el caso de que* call for the subjunctive:

En caso de que no esté, llámame	If (s)he's not in call me
Esperaremos dos minutos para darle tiempo de ponerse cómodo, en el caso de que se esté usted duchando (ABE, Pe., dialogue)	We'll wait two minutes for you to make yourself comfortable if you happen to be taking a shower
No les voy a soltar esa información, es sólo en caso de que me pregunten (GZ, Mex., dialogue)	I'm not going to let them have that information; it's only in case they ask me

But *por si* usually, but not invariably, takes the indicative, although *por si* ***acaso*** may take either mood, the subjunctive making the possibility less likely. *Por si* is not followed by the present subjunctive:

Llévate el paraguas por si (*acaso*) *llueve/lloviera/lloviese* but (**not** **por si llueva*)	Take the umbrella in case it rains
Siempre estaba haciendo favores a la gente por si acaso a alguien se le ocurría devolvérselos (SP, Sp.)	She was always doing people favours in case someone thought of repaying them
Está apuntando hacia la otra acera, por si hay un ataque por retaguardia (JI, Mex., 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 that wasn't enough . . .
Conviene que vayas enterado por si alguien te pidiera una aclaración (EM, Sp.)	It would be best if you were informed (lit 'went informed') in case someone asks you for an explanation

(1) *Suponiendo que* when it means 'supposing that' requires the subjunctive: *suponiendo que él **venga**, ¿lo/le vas a dejar entrar?* 'supposing he comes, are you going to let him in?' But when it means 'to assume' it takes the indicative: *traicionaste a quien se suponía que era tu socio y tu mejor amigo* (GZ, Mex., dialogue) 'you betrayed the person who was supposed to be your partner and best friend'.

20.4.7 Subjunctive with subordinators of time

These include such words and phrases as the following:

a medida que/según/conforme as
antes (*de*) *que* before
cuando when
desde que since
después (*de*) *que* after
en cuanto/nada más/apenas/tan pronto como/una vez que/nomás que (Lat. Am.) as soon as
hasta que until
mientras (*que*) as long as, while (see 20.4.9)
siempre que every time

After subordinators of time, the subordinate verb is in the subjunctive when its action is or was still in the future, as in the following examples:

Llegamos antes de que empezara/empezase a nevar (for *antes de que* see note 2)	We arrived before it started snowing
No sea muy dura con su empleada, después que se haya tranquilizado (SV, Ch., dialogue In Spain usually *después de que . . .*)	Don't be very hard on your maid after you've calmed down
Tú conoces a mi prima. Cuando venga le diré que te lo cuente (AA, Cu., dialogue)	You know my cousin. When she comes I'll tell her to tell you about it
Íbamos a cenar cuando llegaran/llegasen los demás	We were going to have supper when the rest arrived (i.e. they hadn't arrived yet)
Reparte los folletos conforme los diputados vayan entrando	Hand out the pamphlets as the members of parliament come in
tan pronto como acabe la huelga . . .	as soon as the strike is over . . .
En cuanto pueda me compraré un reloj (MB, Ur., dialogue)	As soon as I can, I'll buy a watch
Nomás que oscurezca te vas por la carretera (JI, Mex., dialogue; Sp. *en cuanto oscurezca.* For *nomás* see 27.6)	As soon as it gets dark you go down the road
Apenas pueda, te llamo (JA, Arg. *Apenas* is discussed more fully at 27.5.7. See also note 2)	As soon as I can, I'll ring you
Hasta que no llegue a ser ministro no se quedará contento (see 27.2.4 for the use of *no* here)	He won't be satisfied until he becomes a Minister
Siempre que la vea se lo recordaré	I'll remind her whenever/if I see her

When the event is in the past or present, or is a habitual event, the indicative is used

Me saludan cuando llegan (habitual)	They greet me when they arrive
tan pronto como acabó la huelga . . .	as soon as the strike was over . . .
Me doy cuenta, a medida que Rosita pasa mis notas a máquina, de que he reunido cerca de doscientas páginas (CF, Mex.)	I realize, as Rosita types out my notes, that I've assembled nearly 200 pages
Hasta que no llegó a ser ministro no se quedó contento (see 27.2.4 for *no* here)	He wasn't satisfied until he became a Minister

Ya es de noche cuando . . . oye los débiles golpes en la puerta (DT, Mex. Historic present)	It is already night when he hears the feeble tapping on the door

(1) Important: students of French and Italian must not 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'.

(2) Of these subordinators of time, only *antes de, después de*, *hasta* and *nada más* (and in Latin America *nomás*) can take an infinitive construction when the subjects of both verbs are identical: *me fui después de comer* 'I went after I had eaten', *hazlo antes de acostarte* 'do it before you go to bed', *trabajó hasta no poder más* '(s)he worked until (s)he could work no longer', *la llamaré nada más llegar a casa* 'I'll call her as soon as I get home'. In the case of *nada más*, the subjects do not need to be identical: *salí nada más entrar ella* 'I left as soon as she came in'. *Apenas* is heard with the infinitive in very informal speech when the subjects are identical, although this is stigmatized: ?*lo hice apenas llegar a casa* (good Spanish *lo hice apenas llegué a casa*) 'I did it as soon as I got home'. The rest allow only a finite verb, indicative or subjunctive according to the rule given.

(3) As we have said, *antes de que* is always followed by the subjunctive because it must refer to a still future event. Both *antes de que* and *antes que* are correct, the former being more common in Spain. *Antes que* also means 'rather than' and must not be confused with *antes* (*de*) *que* 'before': *cualquier cosa antes que casarse* 'anything rather than get married'.

(4) *Después* (*de*) *que* 'after' and similar phrases, e.g. *a los pocos días de que*, 'a few days after', *luego de que* 'after', 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 – and in Latin America they frequently do. But in Spain the *-ra* and *-se* forms are common after these words and after *desde que*: see 18.3.3. *Después que* for *después de que* is quite common in Latin America and is spreading in Spain. *Desde que* 'from the moment that . . .' rarely refers to the future, but cf. *la vigilaré desde que llegue hasta que se vaya* 'I'll keep an eye on her from the moment she arrives until she leaves'.

(5) *Nada más* is followed by an indicative when it means *solo*: *solo/sólo/nada más voy un momento a comprar un periódico* 'I'm just going out for a moment to buy a newspaper'.

20.4.8 Subjunctive with subordinators of condition and exception

These are words meaning 'provided that', 'unless', 'except', etc. They all take the subjunctive (for *si* and *como* when they mean 'if' see 29.8.1 and 2) Those that include the word *de*, e.g. *con tal de . . .*, are used with the infinitive when the subject of both verbs is identical, as explained at 20.4.2, e.g. *me llevaré el libro a condición de no tener que leerlo* 'I'll take the book on condition that I don't have to read it'.

(**a**) **Condition**: the following mean 'provided that', 'on condition that':

con tal (*de*) *que*	*a condición de que*	*a cambio de que*
siempre que (also 'whenever'. See 20.4.7)	*con la condición de que*	(also 'in return for')
siempre y cuando (emphatic)	*bajo* (*la*) *condición de que*	
	mientras as long as. See 20.4.9	

El Gobierno está dispuesto a negociar siempre que/siempre y cuando/con tal (*de*) *que/a condición de que sean razonables*	The Government is ready to negotiate provided they are reasonable

. . . con tal de que mi hijo se eduque en otro ambiente soy capaz de todo (ES, Mex., dialogue)	. . . provided that my child is educated in a different environment I'm capable of anything
. . . siempre que su muerte se debiera a causas naturales (LS, Ch., dialogue)	. . . provided his death was due to natural causes
Firmaremos a cambio de que no se haga público hasta la semana que viene	We'll sign in return for it not being made public until next week

(b) Exception (occasionally followed by the indicative in the cases discussed in note 1):

a no ser que unless	*a menos que* unless	*como no* (*sea que*) unless (in suggestions: see 29.8.2b)
salvo que unless/save that	*fuera de que* (less common) unless	*como no fuera que* unless
excepto que unless/except that	*en vez de que* instead of	

Me casaré contigo a no ser que/salvo que/como no sea que/a menos que hayas cambiado de idea	I'll marry you unless you've changed your mind
No se debe usar esta puerta, excepto que sea en caso de emergencia	This door shouldn't be used unless it's an emergency
Íbamos de vacaciones en agosto salvo/a no ser que/como no fuera que yo estuviera/estuviese muy ocupado	We took our holidays/vacation in August unless I was very busy
No tenemos nada que decir, como no sea que sentimos mucho lo de mi ahijada (MS, Mex., dialogue)	We've nothing to say except that we're very sorry about what happened to my goddaughter
¿En vez de que te quedes solo aquí, por qué no vamos todos al cine?	Instead of staying alone here, why don't we all go to the cinema?

(1) *Excepto/salvo que* and *con la salvedad de que* are followed by the indicative when they mean 'except for the fact that': *en realidad no sé gran cosa de él, excepto que parece que le gusta poner su nombre a cosas* (interview, *La Jornada*, Mex.) 'in fact I don't know much about him except that he likes putting his name to things', *es difícil hacer previsiones sobre esta cumbre, salvo que no van a reducir sus cuotas* (*El Economista*, Mex.) 'it's difficult to make forecasts about this summit meeting, except that they aren't going to lower their quotas'.

20.4.9 *Mientras* (*que*)

Mientras can mean 'while', 'whereas' or 'provided that'.

(a) In the first meaning it often simply refers to something happening at the same time, in which case the indicative is used: *siempre tengo la televisión apagada mientras comemos* 'I always keep the television switched off while we're eating', *sonreía mientras atravesaba el estacionamiento frente a la Facultad de Ciencias* (EP, Mex.) 'he was smiling while he crossed the parking lot opposite the Science Faculty'. But if it refers to the future the subjunctive is possible, although the indicative is more usual: *mañana puedes hacer la comida mientras yo arreglo/arregle la casa* 'tomorrow you can do the cooking while I tidy the house'.

(b) If a contrast is implied – i.e. if it means 'on the other hand' or 'whereas' – *mientras* ***que*** is preferred: *mi padre nunca se movería de la capital mientras que mi madre conocería en Tetuán a un militar sosegado y viudo* (MDu, Sp.) 'my father was never to move from the capital whereas my mother was to meet a quiet military widower in Tetuán'.

(c) If it means 'provided that' or 'as long as' it requires the subjunctive: *mientras el Gobierno no tome sus medidas, no habrá paz para la gente honrada* (EM, dialogue, Sp.) 'as long as the government doesn't take measures, there will be no peace for honest folk', *mientras no hagan ruido me da igual quiénes sean mis vecinos* 'as long as they don't make a noise, I don't care who my neighbours are', *mientras nosotros no nos hiciéramos visibles no teníamos problema contigo* (MS, Mex., dialogue) 'as long as we didn't make ourselves visible we had no problem with you'.

20.4.10 Subjunctive with subordinators of concession (words meaning 'although')

There are several ways of saying 'although' of which *aunque* is the most common:

aunque	*siquiera*	*si bien*
así	*aun cuando*	*y eso que*

Words meaning 'despite the fact that' have a similar meaning:

a pesar de que	*pese a que* (literary)	*a despecho de que* (literary)

With the exception of *si bien que* and *y eso que*, which are always used with the indicative (see 37.6.2), these require the subjunctive if they point to an event which is or was still in the future: compare *aunque llueve* 'although it is raining' and *aunque llueva* 'even if it rains'; also *aunque llovía* 'although it was raining' and *aunque lloviera/lloviese* 'even if it rained' (it hadn't started raining yet). *Así* always requires the subjunctive when it means 'although'. Those that contain the word *de* may be constructed with an infinitive in the circumstances described at 20.4.2:

Es un valiente, no hablará así/aunque lo/le amenacen	He's a brave man, he won't talk even if they threaten him
No lo confesó aunque le ofrecieron dinero	(S)he didn't confess although they offered him/her money
No lo confesaría aunque lo/le mataran/matasen	(S)he wouldn't confess it even if they killed him/her
. . . tienen que cumplir, así caminen bajo la lluvia (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	They have to fulfil their mission, even if they walk in the rain
Vendieron la finca, a pesar de que el abuelo se oponía	They sold the estate, despite the fact that grandfather opposed it
¿A pesar de que tus padres se opongan? (ABV, Sp., dialogue)	Even though your parents will/may be against it?
A pesar de que no posee el aura de misterio de los primeros años (JV, Mex.)	Despite him not having the aura of mystery of the early years

(1) The subjunctive may be optionally used with *aunque* to refer to past or habitual events. In this case it strengthens the concession, making it an equivalent to '*even* though': *jamás culparé a Octavia, aunque lo haya intentado alguna vez* (ABE, Pe., dialogue) 'I'll never blame Octavia, even though I may have tried to sometimes', *él era un importante hombre de negocios, aunque su padre lo hubiera menospreciado a veces* (GZ, Mex., dialogue) 'he was an important businessman, even though his father had despised him at times'.

(2) 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*, Sp.) '. . .two independent sources, which will be mentioned, even if in vague terms'.

20.5 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 a subjunctive verb is repeated, as in *pase lo que pase* 'whatever happens', *no hay salida para ti, hagas lo que hagas, vayas a donde vayas* (CF, Mex., dialogue) 'there's no way out for you, whatever you do, wherever you go'.

20.5.1 'Whether . . . or'

The *forma reduplicativa* is used, as in:

Escuchaba las conversaciones con sus amigas, repararan o no repararan en mí (SP, Sp.)	I listened to the conversations with her female friends, whether they noticed me or not

The second verb is sometimes replaced by *hacer* or, in negative phrases, omitted altogether:

. . . trabaje en una red, o lo haga desde un PC en casa . . .	. . . whether you work on a network or from a PC at home . . .
Estuviese/Estuviera o no enfermo, lo cierto es que no vino al trabajo	Whether he was ill/sick or not, the fact is he didn't come to work
México está cambiando, les guste o no (*El Economista*, Mex.)	Mexico is changing whether you/they like it or not

20.5.2 'However much/little . . .', etc.

With *por muy* + adjective or noun the subjunctive is obligatory: *¿cómo consentía que ese hombre horrible, por muy amigo suyo que hubiera sido hacía unos años, pasara tanto tiempo con mi madre?* (SP, Sp.) 'how could he let that awful man – despite having been such a friend of his some years before – spend so much time with my mother?', *por poco convincente que hubiera sido su explicación* 'however unconvincing his/her explanation may have been . . .'.

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 may be used: *por mucho que/por más que se lo dijo, no lo hizo* '(s)he didn't do it however much (s)he asked him/her'; but the subjunctive is required if the event is or was still in the future, and also for purposes of emphasis (see note 1):

Por mucho calor que haga, no abrirán la ventana	However hot it gets/is, they won't open the window
A una por más liberada que esté siempre le gustará que el hombre le abra la puerta del coche (ES, Mex., dialogue)	However liberated one is one will always like the man to open the car door for one
Por más que llueva no se le van a resucitar los novillos muertos (MP, Arg., dialogue)	However much it rains, his dead steers won't come back to life
Por mucho que corriera y que se escondiera, él acabaría por encontrarla (RM, Sp.)	However much she ran and hid, he'd eventually find her

(1) Using the subjunctive for events or states that are realities strengthens the force of the concession: *por mucho que/más que se lo dijera/dijese, no lo hacía* 'however often (s)he told him/her, (s)he didn't do it', *por más brillante que fuera en la física teórica, no tenía adiestramiento astronómico* (EP, Mex.) 'however brilliant he was in theoretical physics he had no training in astronomy'.

(2) To translate 'however it is', 'however it was', etc., either the *forma reduplicativa* is used or *como quiera que* + subjunctive, e.g. *. . . pero como quiera que sea, yo he comprado . . . una media docena por lo menos* (J JA, Mex., dialogue) 'but however it is/but all the same, I've bought at least a half a dozen', or . . . *sea como sea* . . .

20.5.3 'The more . . . the more', 'the less . . . the less'

Cuanto/a/os/as más . . . más and *cuanto/a/os/as menos . . . menos* are the standard formulas. The general rule is applied: if the event is a reality (i.e. has occurred or is occurring) the indicative is used, otherwise the subjunctive is required:

Cuanto más comas más querrás	The more you eat the more you'll want
Cuanto más comías, más querías	The more you ate the more you wanted
Yo sabía que cuanto más bebiera/bebiese más me emborracharía	I knew that the more I drank the drunker I'd get
Cuanta más sal pongas, peor sabrá	The more salt you put in the worse it'll taste
Cuanto menos digas menos se inquietarán	The less you say the less they'll worry

For the use of *mientras* instead of *cuanto* in this construction, and, in parts of Latin America, of *entre*, instead of *cuanto*, see 6.11.

20.5.4 'Whatever'

The *forma reduplicativa* is normally used:

digan lo que digan/hagan lo que hagan	whatever they say/whatever they do
Den lo que den, siempre vamos al Metropolitan (EP, Mex., dialogue. Sp. *pongan lo que pongan . . .*)	Whatever's on (lit. 'whatever they give') we always go to the Metropolitan cinema
Hablara de lo que hablara, se estaba dirigiendo a mí (SP, Sp.)	Whatever she was talking about, she was addressing herself to me
Cómpralo sea como sea	'Buy it whatever it looks like' or 'buy it whatever the cost'
Dijo que lo compraría fuera/fuese como fuera/fuese	(S)he said she'd buy it whatever happened/anyway

Comoquiera que sea and *comoquiera que fuera/fuese* could be used in the last two examples, but they are less usual. *Como quiera* is an alternative spelling, not recommended by the Academy (*NGLE* 25.13q).

Lo que + the subjunctive may also be used in some contexts:

Aquella novela o lo que quiera que fuese era muy difícilmente publicable (JM, Sp.)	That novel, or whatever it was, was very unlikely to be publishable
. . . por temor, por pereza o por lo que sea . . . (SP, Sp.)	. . . out of fear, laziness, or whatever
Le pago lo que quiera, pero vaya de una vez (MS, Mex., dialogue)	I'll pay you whatever you want, but get going *now*!

(1) The English 'whatever' may mean 'whichever', in which case it is best translated by an appropriate tense of *sea cual sea . . .*. This *forma reduplicativa* 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 'camellias are pretty whatever their colour' (for a general discussion of *cualquiera*, see 10.8), *fuera/fuese cual fuera/fuese la razón . . .* 'whatever the reason was . . .'.

(2) 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'.

20.5.5 'Whichever'

When this word means 'which', 'whichever one' or 'the one that' it is usually translated by *que* or *el que* + subjunctive, e.g.

Escoge la maceta que más te guste	Choose whichever flowerpot you like most
—¿Qué sombrero me llevo? —El que usted quiera	'Which hat should I take?' 'Whichever (one) you want'

For details see the subjunctive in relative clauses, 39.15.

20.5.6 'Whenever'

This is translated by *cuando* with the subjunctive when the event referred to is or was still in the future, and by the indicative in all other cases:

Vienen cuando quieren (habitual)	They come whenever they like
Vendrán cuando quieran	They'll come whenever they like
Dijeron que vendrían cuando quisieran/quisiesen	They said they'd come when they wanted to
La banca mexicana debe facilitar una relación con sus clientes "donde quiera y cuando quiera y como quiera." (*El Economista*, Mex.)	Mexican banking should provide its customers with a [digital] link "where, when they want it and however they want it"

(1) *Siempre que*, as well as meaning 'provided that' (see 20.4.8), may also mean 'whenever'; *cada vez que* can mean the same thing: *yo la saludaba siempre que/cada vez que la veía* 'I said hello to her whenever I saw her'. When used with the subjunctive *siempre que* usually means 'provided that'. The issue may be clarified by using an alternative for 'whenever', e.g. *no se te olvide saludarla cada vez que la veas* (future reference) 'don't forget to say hello to her whenever you see her'.

(2) *Cuando quiera que* is old-fashioned for *cuando*, but it is used as an occasional literary variant for *siempre que*: *. . . cuando quiera que en la vida española se ponen tensos los ánimos* (R. Pérez de Ayala, Sp., quoted by Seco) 'whenever passions are stirred in Spanish life'.

20.5.7 'Anyone who . . .', 'whoever . . .'

For *cualquiera que*, *quienquiera que*, see 39.15.2.

20.5.8 'Wherever'

Dondequiera que or the *forma reduplicativa.* They take the subjunctive if they refer to an as yet unidentified place:

Dondequiera que vaya/Vaya donde vaya me lo encontraré	Wherever I go I'll meet him
Dondequiera que fuese/Fuese donde fuese, me lo encontraba (or *fuera . . .*)	Wherever I went I met him
Estés donde estés, busca un teléfono público (LS, Ch., dialogue)	Wherever you are, look for a public phone
Sean de donde sean, lo que importa es saber dónde tienen a tu padre (EM, Mex. dialogue)	Wherever they're from, the important thing is to find where they're keeping your father

(1) The *que* is sometimes omitted, e.g. *dondequiera se encuentren* 'wherever they're found', but Seco (1998), 170, disapproves.

(2) *Adondequiera* can be used when the meaning is 'wherever . . . to': *adondequiera que vayan* 'wherever they go (to)' or *vayan a donde vayan*. But *dondequiera que vayan* is also common.

20.6 Subjunctive in subordinate relative clauses

E.g. *busco una persona que* ***sepa*** *sueco* 'I'm looking for a person who knows Swedish' compared with *conozco a una persona que* ***sabe*** *sueco* 'I know a person who knows Swedish'. This important topic is discussed at 39.15.

20.7 Use of the subjunctive to make imperatives

All matters connected with the imperative are treated in Chapter 21. As a reminder, it should be noted that

(**a**) The subjunctive is used to form all negative imperatives: *no me hables* 'don't talk to me', *no se vayan ustedes* 'don't go away'.

(**b**) The subjunctive is used for all imperatives with the pronouns *usted* and *ustedes*: *guarden* (*ustedes*) *silencio* 'keep quiet', *váyase* (*usted*) 'go away'.

(**c**) The subjunctive is used to form first-person plural and all third-person imperatives, e.g. *sentémonos* 'let's sit down', *que entren* 'let them come in'/'tell them to come in'.

20.8 Tense agreement with the subjunctive in all subordinate clauses

Despite the claims of some traditional grammars, there are no rigid rules of tense agreement between main and subordinate clauses, but the following are the most usual combinations:

(a) Main clause in present indicative tense

- Present subjunctive: *me gusta que hable* 'I like her/him to talk', *lo más probable es que la deje ir* (EM, Mex., dialogue) 'the most likely thing is that he'll let her go'.
- Perfect subjunctive: *me encanta que hayas venido* 'I'm really glad you've come'.
- Imperfect subjunctive (see note 1): *es muy extraño que no me vieras llegar* (MS, Mex., dialogue) 'it's very strange that you didn't see me arrive', *no creo que fuera/fuese detective* 'I don't believe (s)he was a detective'.

(**b**) **Main clause in future tense**

- Present subjunctive: *nos contentaremos con que terminen para finales del mes* 'we'll be content with them finishing by the end of the month', *¡jamás soportaré que mi sobrina se case con un tipo que va por el mundo vestido de profesor en vacaciones!* (ABE, Pe., dialogue) 'I'll never tolerate my niece marrying a guy who goes around dressed like a teacher on vacation!' or, possibly '. . . a guy who goes around on vacation dressed like a teacher!'

(**c**) **Main clause in conditional or conditional perfect tense**

- 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 tense (see note 2)**

- Present subjunctive: *le he dicho que se siente* (AG, Sp., dialogue; European Spanish perfect of recency) 'I told you to sit down'.
- Perfect subjunctive: *ha sido un milagro que no te hayan reconocido* 'it was a miracle they didn't recognize you'.
- Imperfect subjunctive: *ha sido un milagro que no te reconocieran/reconociesen* 'it was a miracle that they didn't recognize you'.

(**e**) **Main clause in imperfect, preterite or pluperfect tense (see notes 3 and 4)**

- Imperfect subjunctive: *la idea era que cobrarais/cobraseis los viernes* 'The idea was that you'd get paid on Fridays', *me dio miedo que me quitaran al niño* (CF, Mex., dialogue) 'I felt afraid they might take my child away from me', *yo te había pedido que me prestaras/prestases cien dólares* 'I'd asked you to lend me 100 dollars'.
- Pluperfect subjunctive: *me sorprendía que hubiera/hubiese protestado* 'I was surprised that (s)he had protested'.
- Present subjunctive. This is common, especially in the media, when the main clause refers to the past and mentions an action that has still not taken place: *el secretario de Naciones Unidas pidió ayer a Estados Unidos que no actúe unilateralmente contra Irak* (*El País*, Sp.) 'The UN secretary asked the US yesterday not to act unilaterally against Iraq'. It is also common in popular Latin-American speech where standard language requires the past subjunctive. See note 4.

(1) The combination present + imperfect or perfect subjunctive occurs when a comment is being made about a past event. 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'.

(2) 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* '(s)he's given orders for us to surrender' and *el clima que se está creando ha llevado a que se hablara/hablase de intervención del Ejército* (or *hable*) 'the climate that is being created has led to talk of Army intervention'.

(3) 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* 'God decreed that snakes should have no legs' (*las piernas* is used for human legs).

(4) Use of the present when both verbs refer to the past is common in popular Latin-American speech and informal writing but is unacceptable to many Peninsular speakers: *el inspector aduanero*

le pidió a la muchacha que le muestre su casaca (*La Prensa*, Pe., Spain *mostrara/mostrase*. In Spain *la casaca* = 'dress coat') 'the Customs inspector asked the girl to show him her coat', *Maduro pidió el martes pasado a la Asamblea Nacional que apruebe el decreto* (*El Economista*, Mex.) 'Maduro asked the National Assembly last Tuesday to approve the decree'. This construction seems to be spreading to the media in Spain and it is not unknown there in spontaneous speech.

(5) After *como si* 'as if', *igual que si/lo mismo que si* 'the same as if', the verb is always in the imperfect or pluperfect subjunctive: *le hablaré como si yo no supiese/supiera hablar bien el castellano* 'I'll talk to him as if I didn't know how to speak Spanish well', *como si no me hubiera visto* 'as if (s)he hadn't seen me'. See also 20.4.5c for *como si.*

20.9 The future subjunctive

The future subjunctive (see 16.7.7 for its forms) is nowadays obsolete in everyday Spanish, except in a few literary 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'; the present or imperfect subjunctive is used instead. But it is still used in legal jargon and official documents, e.g. in the Penal Code and other collections of laws:

*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* (legal dictionary)	'BET': A bilateral contract in which it is agreed that a person who makes an accurate forecast or wins an argument shall receive an agreed sum 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 (advert., Sp., *hubiera/hubiese* more normal).	. . . which offers very wide advantages when removing the engine or in repair work – should such a thing ever arise

It is also found in solemn language in Latin-American newspapers:

Sólo la aplicación de un plan de estrictas medidas, aun cuando estas/éstas resultaren antipopulares, permitirá salir de la actual situación (*La Nación*, Arg.)	Only the application of a plan of strict measures, even if these turn out to be unpopular, would allow us to get out of the present situation
. . . facilitándoles, si fuere necesario, intérpretes u otros medios eficaces (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	. . . providing them, if necessary, with interpreters or other effective means

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 20

This Appendix contains some miscellaneous points connected with the subjunctive which may interest advanced students.

20.10 The subjunctive and 'uncertainty'

Many grammars claim that the subjunctive has a meaning associated with 'uncertainty' or 'doubt'. This is true in some cases – *es posible que llueva* 'it's possible that it will rain' – but there are many cases where the subjunctive expresses a certainty:

Me acostaré cuando se ponga el sol	I'll go to bed when the sun sets
No es verdad que la tierra sea plana	It's not true that the Earth is flat
Es una tragedia que exista la pobreza	It's a tragedy that poverty exists
Me alegro mucho de que hayas aprobado el examen	I'm really glad you passed the exam
El hecho de que exista la luna explica muchas cosas . . .	The fact that the Moon exists explains many things
Perdieron aunque jugaran/jugasen bien	They lost even though they played well

Moreover, the subjunctive is not always obligatory after some common words that express uncertainty, e.g. *a lo mejor llueve esta noche* 'maybe it'll rain tonight', *quizás Manuel se* ***ha*** *quedado en casa* 'perhaps Manuel has stayed at home'.

A subtler argument is put forward by some linguists, e.g. that the subjunctive is an *irrealis* mood, i.e. it does not refer directly to what is necessarily real. This does indeed explain sentences like *me acostaré cuando se ponga el sol* 'I'll go to bed when the sun sets' which, although a certainty, is still in the future and not yet 'real', or *quiero comprar un coche que tenga cuatro puertas* 'I want to buy a car that has four doors' where the four-door car is still unidentified and is therefore 'unreal'. But it does not explain sentences like *es una pena que Marte apenas teng****a*** *atmósfera* 'it's a pity that Mars barely has an atmosphere' or *siento mucho que te* ***hayas*** *roto el tobillo* 'I'm really sorry you've broken your ankle', both of which refer to something real.

Probably the best approach is to abandon the idea that the subjunctive has a definable 'meaning' or that there is a single underlying rule that generates it. Instead one should simply learn when to use it without enquiring too closely why.

The *NGLE* 25.1j agrees with the objection that the subjunctive does not necessarily express 'uncertainty'.

20.11 In praise of the Spanish subjunctive

English has almost completely lost the subjunctive. Apart from set phrases like 'if I were you' (for 'if I was you') it appears only in formal literary styles in sentences like 'if this **be** true', 'it is important that this problem **receive** (for 'should receive' or 'receives') immediate attention', or 'lest he **try** to escape again' for 'lest he tries to escape again'.

The price that English pays for this loss is a series of ambiguities which Spanish makes clear and English speakers are usually unaware of. The following examples reflect British English; American English seems to make slightly more use of subjunctive forms:

- 'We insist that the children are treated well'. Are they treated well or not? If they *are*, then indicative in Spanish: *insistimos en que se trata bien a los niños.* If they *should* be, then subjunctive: *se trat****e*** *bien a . . .*). American English seems to require 'should be . . .' for the second meaning.
- 'We decided to eat when they arrived'. Does this mean 'when they arrived we decided to eat' (indicative: *decidimos cenar cuando llegaron*) or 'we decided to delay eating until they arrived' (subjunctive: *. . . cuando* ***llegaran/llegasen***)?
- 'I'm going to move to a country where it never snows'. Does this mean 'I've discovered a country where it never snows and I'm going there' (indicative: *me voy a mudar a un país donde nunca nieva*) or are you still looking for one (subjunctive: *. . . donde nunca nieve*)?

- 'He didn't leave because he was angry'. If this means 'he left, but not because he was angry' then subjunctive: *no se fue porque **estuviese/estuviera** enfadado*. If it means 'he stayed because he was angry' then indicative: *no se fue porque estaba enfadado.*
- 'When we get the signal we return to base'. Is this 'whenever we receive the signal we return to base', standing orders, so indicative: *cuando recibimos la señal volvemos a la base*), or are we waiting for the signal . . . *cuando recib**a**mos la señal volveremos a la base*?
- 'He was wearing a mask so no one identified him'. Does this mean 'his intention or hope was that no one would identify him' . . . *llevaba una máscara de manera que nadie lo/le **identificara/identificase*** or did no one identify him – *. . . de manera que nadie lo/le identificó?* North Americans apparently insist on 'would' for the intentional form, so they should know when to use the Spanish subjunctive.
- 'I didn't know she was so intelligent'. Does this mean 'she *is* intelligent, but I didn't know it'? – *no sabía que era tan inteligente* – or 'I didn't know she was so intelligent and I'm not saying she is' – *no sabía que **fuera/fuese** tan inteligente*?

20.12 Regional variations in the use of the subjunctive

There is generally little variation in the use of the subjunctive in educated usage throughout the Spanish-speaking world. However, students may come across some of the following variations.

20.12.1 Use of the subjunctive in questions.

In Latin America, and especially in Mexico, but not in Spain, the subjunctive may be used in direct and indirect questions, as in *¿tú crees que uno **sepa** cuándo se va a morir?* (JRG, Mex., dialogue, Spain . . . *uno sabe*) 'do you believe that one knows when one's going to die?', *pero con los retrasos de los aviones y luego con este clima no sé a qué horas **llegue*** (ES, Mex., dialogue; Sp. . . . *a qué hora llega/llegará*) 'but with the planes being late and then this weather I don't know what time she'll arrive', *¿usted cree que esto **ayude**?* (MP, Arg. Dialogue, Sp. . . . *esto ayuda*) 'do you really think that this helps?'

(1) *No saber si* . . . often takes the subjunctive in Mexico, Central America, Chile and the Andes: *no sé si quieras venir* 'I don't know whether you want to come', . . . *si quieres venir* in Spain and the River Plate region. The same is true of *no saber cuándo*: *no sé cuándo sea el mejor momento* 'I don't know when the best moment will be', Sp. *cuándo será . . .* (*NGLE* 25.5p), *. . . porque quién sabe cuándo vayas a regresar* (ES, Mex., dialogue; Sp. *vas a regresar*) 'because who knows when you'll be back'.

20.12.2 Use of the conditional for the subjunctive

In some regions, especially in northern Spain and in the Southern Cone, the Andes and Colombia, there is a tendency in popular speech to use the conditional instead of the imperfect subjunctive, e.g. ?*si tendría dinero, lo compraría* for *si tuviera/tuviese dinero lo compraría* 'If I had money, I'd buy it'. *NGLE* 23.15d and 23.15g says that this is avoided in educated speech and in writing.

20.12.3 Use of indicative after subordinators of time

There is a tendency in parts of Latin America to use the indicative after subordinators of time that point to the future, e.g. ?*se lo diré cuando vienen* or *cuando vendrán* for *se lo diré cuando **vengan*** 'I'll tell her/him/you/them when they come'. This is avoided in careful speech and in writing.

20.12.4 Use of the future indicative or conditional after phrases meaning 'it is possible that . . .'

Popular Latin-American speech sometimes uses indicative tenses after phrases like *es/era posible que* 'it is/was possible that': *la posibilidad de que no podrán* (Spain *puedan*) *moler fábricas que no cuenten con caña suficiente* (*Granma*, Cu.) '. . . the possibility that mills that do not have enough sugar-cane will not be able to do any crushing'. This is avoided in careful styles. Such sentences require the subjunctive in standard Spanish, and use of the subjunctive is the norm everywhere: see 20.3.5.

Use of *capaz que* for 'possibly', often, but not always, with the indicative, is typical of familiar Latin-American speech: *capaz que la conoció cuando fue a Los Ángeles* (EM, Mex., dialogue) 'maybe he met her when he went to Los Angeles', *capaz está enferma* 'maybe she's ill'. *Capaz* means only 'capable' in standard European Spanish.

20.12.5 The subjunctive in Argentina

In Argentina, where *voseo* is normal (see 12.3.1), careful speakers use the standard Spanish subjunctive forms with *vos* because the expected *vos* forms with a stressed final vowel are a shade too popular for many people. The *NGLE* 4.7e notes that this prejudice applies more to positive forms than to negative forms like *no digás*, *no hagás* which are more widespread. In the following examples, the speakers address one another as *vos*: *tengo miedo que no vengas . . . que aflojes* (JA, Arg. dialogue; Spain . . . *miedo* ***de*** *que*) 'I'm scared you won't come . . . that you'll go off the idea', *no digas nada pero papá fue a matar un pollo . . .* (MP, Arg., dialogue) 'don't say anything, but father went to kill a chicken . . .'. But the following example is of very familiar language: *me extraña que defendás la hipocresía* (Mafalda cartoon, Arg., 'standard' style . . . *que defiendas*) 'I'm surprised at you defending hypocrisy'. In Uruguay the popular *vos* forms of the subjunctive are more stigmatized.

20.13 Subjunctive 'contamination'

Students will encounter examples of the subjunctive that seem to contradict the explanations given in this chapter. One common case is what could be called 'subjunctive contamination', i.e. the tendency to use the subjunctive unnecessarily later in a sentence that starts with a subjunctive. An example is *no es posible suponer que esta/ésta sea la razón por la que el acusado* ***se llevara/ llevase*** *el coche* 'it is not possible to conclude that this is the reason why the accused took the car away'. *Llevó* would have been correct, but the combined effect of *posible* and *suponer que . . .*, which here invite the subjunctive, has 'contaminated' the phrase *la razón por la que . . .* which does not in fact require a subjunctive.

21 The imperative

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- Forms of *tú*, *vos*, *vosotros/as* and *usted*(*es*) imperatives (Section 21.2)
- The imperative of *estar* (Section 21.2.6)
- How to form negative imperatives (*no lo hagas*, etc.) (Section 21.3)
- The position of object pronouns with the imperative (Section 21.4)
- First-person plural imperative (*vámonos* 'let's go', *sentémonos* 'let's sit down', etc.) (Section 21.5)
- Third-person imperatives (*que entre* 'let her/him come in', *que hablen* 'let them speak', etc.) (Section 21.6)
- Impersonal imperatives (*véase*, *escríbase*, etc.) (Section 21.8)
- Use of the infinitive as an imperative (*empujar*, *tirar*, etc.) (Section 21.9)
- Present tense used as an imperative (Section 21.10)
- Making imperatives mellower (Section 21.11)

21.1 General remarks

The imperative is used to give orders or to make requests. As in English, a simple imperative, e.g. *hazlo* 'do it', can sound abrupt, so intonation and attitude are important. In Spanish, a friendly manner counts for much more than constant repetition of *por favor* or *haga el favor* 'please', which, like *gracias*, English-speakers constantly over-use. In Spain, *por favor* is strictly speaking required when asking a favour, and since baristas, waiters or salespersons are simply doing their job, *por favor* is not really necessary. However, *por favor* is nowadays heard more often than before, especially in Mexico, where everyday language is very polite.

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' – for which reason knowledge of the subjunctive forms of verbs is essential; (**b**) for Latin Americans there is no *vosotros/vosotras* imperative: *usted* and *ustedes* + the present subjunctive are used for both strangers and friends, and even for children and animals.

(1) Important: English allows passive imperatives, normally only in the negative: 'don't be fooled by him', 'don't get stung by a bee'. A different solution must be found in Spanish: *no te dejes engañar por lo que dice* 'don't be deceived by what he says', *que no te pique una abeja* 'don't let a bee sting you'/'don't get stung . . .', *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'.

21.2 Positive forms of the imperative

For negative imperatives ('don't do', 'don't say', etc.) see 21.3.

21.2.1 Pronouns and the imperative

As in English, addition of a subject pronoun to an imperative can make an order emphatic and brusque:

*¡**Tú** bájate de ahí!/Usted bájese*	You get down from there!
*¡**Vosotros** callaos!* (Lat. Am. *ustedes cállense*)	You shut up!

However, *usted* may be added after an imperative to reinforce the politeness: *venga usted a las ocho* 'come at eight o'clock'.

(1) Spoken Mexican Spanish often makes imperatives emphatic by adding *-le*: *avánce**n**le* 'move on!', *pásen**l**e* 'come in!', *ándal**e*** 'wow!'/'get moving!', *¡córre**l**e!* 'hurry!'.

21.2.2 The *tú* imperative

The familiar singular imperative (*tú* form) is, with eight exceptions, formed by removing the *-s* of the second-person singular of the present indicative: *llamas* > *llama*, *lees* > *lee*. The exceptions are:

decir to say: *di*	*poner* to put: *pon*	*tener* to have: *ten*
hacer to do/make: *haz*	*salir* to leave/go out: *sal*	*venir* to come: *ven*
ir to go: *ve* (*vete* = 'go away')	*ser* to be: *sé*	

Anda, sé bueno y márchate (JMa, Sp., dialogue)	Come on, be good and go away
Ven a tomar el café cuando quieras	Come and have coffee whenever you want
Ten cuidado	Be careful
—Vete —le dijo—. Vete, antes de que te cobre el dinero que me debes (AM, Mex., dialogue)	'Go away,' she told him. 'Go away before I collect the money you owe me'
Haz clic en/Pincha en el icono	Click on the icon

(1) The *tú* imperative of *haber* is theoretically *he*, but it is never used. As Seco (1998, 243), points out, the nowadays rather stilted literary expression *he aquí*, 'here is . . .'/'what follows is . . .' (French *voici . . .*) is not the imperative of *haber*: *he aquí un resultado cuidadosamente escondido* (*El País*, Ur.) 'this is a carefully concealed result'.

(2) The *tú* imperatives of compound verbs formed from *poner* and *tener* have an accent: *propón* 'suggest', *detén* 'arrest'. The accent is not required when one pronoun is suffixed: *proponlo* 'suggest it', *detenlos* 'arrest them'; but *propónselo* 'suggest it to her/him/them'.

21.2.3 The *vos* imperative

The imperative form corresponding to *vos* (Argentina, Uruguay and also most of Central America, see 12.3.1) can usually be found by removing the *-r* from the infinitive; the final vowel is therefore stressed: *tener* > *ten**é***, *contar* > *cont**á***, *decir* > *dec**í***, *defender* > *defend**é***. Pronominal verbs take the pronoun *te*, so the imperative of *lavarse* is *lav**a**te* (the standard form is *lávate*). Further examples, all from Argentina (where *vos* for *tú* is normal in all styles); the *tú* form is included in brackets. Stressed vowels are shown in bold:

*Dec**i**le que pase* (*dile que pase*)	Tell him to come in
*Suscrib**i**te y defend**é** tus derechos* (*suscríbete*, *defiende*)	Sign up/Register and defend your rights
*Ven**í** cuando puedas* (*ven cuando puedas* See 20.12.5 for *ven**í** cuando podás*)	Come when you can
*Levant**a**te* (*levántate*)	Get up
*O**í**me, Pozzi* (MP, Arg., *óyeme*)	Listen to me, Pozzi
*Mostr**a**me* (*muéstrame*)	Show me

(1) The *vos* imperative of *ir* is *andá* or *andate*, the form *ve* being avoided in speech in regions of *voseo*. The predicted form *i* is avoided but it is apparently heard in some rural areas of Argentina.

21.2.4 The *vosotros* imperative

The European Spanish *vosotros/vosotras* imperative (used to address friends, relatives, children, animals) is formed by replacing the *-r* of the infinitive by *-d*. There are no exceptions:

ser to be: *sed*	*tener* to have: *tened*	*cantar* to sing: *cantad*
ir to go: *id*	*venir* to come: *venid*	

The *-d* is dropped in the pronominal ('reflexive') form: *dad* + *os* = *daos* as in *daos la mano* 'shake hands', *lavad* + *os* = *lavaos*: *lavaos el pelo* 'wash your hair'. There is one exception: *id* + *os* = *i**d**os* 'go away!' from *irse*, although in relaxed everyday speech *iros* is nowadays common: see note 2.

(1) Latin-American Spanish uses *ustedes* where European Spanish uses *vosotros/as*, so these forms are virtually unknown in the Americas.

(2) In informal speech in Spain, this imperative is often expressed by the infinitive: *venid* = *venir*, *id* = *ir*, *daos* = *daros*, *veníos* = *veniros*, *lavaos las manos* 'wash your hands' = *lavaros las manos*, etc. Although it apparently has a long history, this construction is considered slovenly by some people. Example: *tener* (for *tened*) *cuidado con Socorro que ya se ha cargado tres matrimonios* (EA, Sp., dialogue) 'watch out for Socorro – she's already messed up three marriages'.

Students should use the forms in *-d* or, in the case of pronominal verbs, *-aos*, *-eos*, *-íos*. For further remarks on the use of the infinitive as an imperative, see 21.9.

21.2.5 The *usted/ustedes* imperative

The 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', *empiecen* 'begin', *ayúdenme* (*ustedes*), 'help (plural) me', etc. *Ustedes* forms are used for both polite and informal address in Latin America:

Vaya a descansar. Preséntese aquí a las 11 (MVM, Sp., dialogue)	Go and rest. Be here at 11 o'clock
¡Ayúdeme, doctora! (MVLl, Pe.)	Help me, doctor!
Perdone si parezco impertinente (LO, Sp.)	Excuse me if I seem impertinent
No me vengan con que es poético ladrarle a la luna (EM, Mex., dialogue)	Don't try telling me that it's poetic to bark at the moon

For the position of the pronouns and the popular Latin-American form ?*siénte*(*n*)*sen*, see 21.4.

See 12.3.2 for more on the use of *usted/ustedes*.

21.2.6 The imperative of *estar*

For the affirmative imperative of *estar* 'to be' the pronominal (i.e. 'reflexive') form is normally, but not exclusively, used: *esta**te** quieto* 'be still'/'stop fidgeting', *esten**se** listos para las ocho* 'be ready by eight'. This is more common with the *tú* imperative because the non-pronominal form is easily confused with the third-person present singular *está*:

Las habrá amenazado con algo. Estate seguro (JM, Sp., dialogue)	He must have threatened them with something. You can be sure (lit. 'be sure')
—*No se mueva. Por favor estese tranquilo* (CF, Mex. dialogue)	Don't move. Please remain calm
—*Esté tranquila —le dijo . . . si se mueve le va mal, así que estese tranquila* (GGM, Col., dialogue)	'Keep calm,' he told her . . . 'if you move it'll go badly for you, so keep calm'

(1) The *NGLE* 42.5b does not approve of the non-pronominal *tú* form of the imperative and the following example would have been expressed *estate lista* in Spain: *paso a cambiarme como a las ocho. Por favor, está lista* (CF, Mex., dialogue) 'I'll be home around eight to get changed. Please be ready'. The unambiguous forms *esté*, *estén* are however considered correct.

(2) One should write *estate* not *estáte*, and *estese/estense*, not *estése/esténse*. Accented forms are often seen in print but the accent is unnecessary: one does not write **deténlo* for *detenlo* 'arrest him' even though the form without a pronoun is *detén*.

(3) There is a very colloquial form of *estate – tate* – heard in several Latin-American countries and occasionally in Spain.

21.3 Negative forms of the imperative

To express a negative imperative, the present subjunctive form must be used:

Affirmative imperative		**Negative imperative**	
canta	sing	*no cantes*	don't sing
vete	go away	*no te vayas*	don't go away
(*usted*) *levántese*	stand up	*no se levante*	don't stand up
(*vosotros*) *sentaos*	sit down	*no os sentéis*	don't sit down
(*ustedes*) *dénselo*	give it to him/her/them	*no se lo den*	don't give it to him/her/them

(1) The Argentine *vos* forms obey the same rules, and foreign students should use the standard subjunctive forms with them for the reasons explained at 20.12.5: *levant**a**te* > *no te levant**es**. No te levant**és*** is a shade too popular for many Argentines and is said to be 'lower class' in Uruguay.

21.4 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 order shown at 14.2.4):

(*Tú*) *dame la mano*	Hold my hand
(*Tú*) *ponte la chaqueta* (Arg., *vos ponete el saco*)	Put your jacket on
(*Usted*) *démelo*	Give it to me
(*Vosotros/as*) *dádmelo*	Give it to me
(*Vosotros*) *despertaos* (colloquial *despertaros*; see 21.2.4 note 2)	Wake up
(*Ustedes*) *dénnoslo*	Give it to us
Déjamelo ver, déjamelo ver (AM, Mex., dialogue; or *déjame verlo*)	Let me see it, let me see it

(**b**) If the imperative is negative, the pronouns precede it in the order shown at 14.2.4:

No me des la lata (*tú*)	Stop pestering me
No te pongas la chaqueta (*tú*)	Don't put your jacket on
No me lo dé (*usted*)	Don't give it to me
No os quejéis (*vosotros*)	Don't complain
No se lo enseñen (*ustedes*)	Don't show it to him/her/them
Es una chica que trabaja conmigo no te vayas a creer (CMG, Sp., dialogue)	She's a girl who works with me – don't get the wrong idea

(1) When a pronoun ending in a vowel is attached to an affirmative *ustedes* imperative, there is a widespread tendency in very 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: ?*levántense**n*** or ?*levántese**n*** (for *levántense*) 'get up', ?*desen cuenta que está por pasar lo más terrible aquí en nuestro país* (reader's letter, *Foros Latinos*, Ven., Sp. *dense cuenta de que*) 'be aware that the most terrible thing is about to happen here in our country', etc. In some places, these forms are heard even in spontaneous educated speech, but only in sub-standard or dialect speech in Spain, and they are not used in Latin-American written styles or careful speech.

(2) In popular language in Spain, pronouns are sometimes put before an affirmative imperative verb and a redundant pronoun is used even for a direct object (this construction should not be confused with imperatives preceded by *que*, discussed at 21.6): ?*¡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 strongly stigmatized and should not be imitated.

(3) Uncertainty surrounds the correct spelling of the *usted* imperative of *dar* (*dé*) when one pronoun is attached: *dele* or *déle* for 'give him/her'? Since the accent merely distinguishes *dé* 'give' from *de* 'of', it is not needed on a form like *dele*, *deles*, *denos.* The Academy does not use it and *El País*, Sp. has dropped it.

21.5 First-person plural imperatives

The present subjunctive can be used to make a first-person plural imperative, e.g. 'let's go!', 'let's begin'. If the verb is pronominal – *lavarse*, *volverse*, etc. –, the final *-s* is dropped before adding *-nos*. If the imperative is negative the pronouns precede the verb:

Empecemos	Let's get started
Asegurémonos primero de la verdad de los hechos (**not** **asegurémos**nos*)	Let us first assure ourselves of the truth of the facts
Generemos un ambiente en donde todas estas luchas hay que continuarlas (interview, Mex.)	Let us generate an environment in which all these struggles must be continued
No nos enfademos (Lat. Am. *no nos enojemos*)	Let's not get angry

(1) Important: *ir/irse* often forms its first-person plural imperative irregularly: *vamos*, *vámonos* 'let's go'. The expected forms, *vayamos*, *vayámonos*, are also used – *vayamos a rescatar a la sargento y cenemos como personas, o intentémoslo* (LS, Sp., dialogue) 'let's go and rescue the sergeant (fem.) and have a proper dinner, or try to' ('lit. 'dine like persons/human beings'). *Vayamos* is found in set phrases, e.g. *vayamos al grano* 'let's get to the point'.

(2) With the exception of *vámonos* 'let's go', informal spoken language may avoid first-person plural imperatives, usually by using *ir a*, or sometimes simply *a* and an infinitive, e.g. *vamos a sentarnos* 'let's sit down', *bueno, a comer* 'OK, let's eat', *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 nos vamos a enfadar*, *no vamos a enfadarnos*. However, *no nos enfademos* is perfectly acceptable in spoken language.

(3) Important: as we said earlier, the final *s* of a first-person plural imperative is dropped if *-nos* is added: *vamos – vámonos*, *sentémonos* 'let's sit down', *quedémonos aquí* 'let's stay here'. The *s* is not dropped before other pronouns (but see the next note): *digámos**les*** 'let's tell them', *celebrémos**lo*** 'let's celebrate it'.

(4) Important: double *s* is not found in Spanish, so one *s* is dropped in cases like the following: *digámoselo* 'let's tell it to him/her/them' (not **digámosselo*), *démoselos* 'let's give them to him/her/them'.

(5) Important: double *n* must be retained and pronounced as a double sound: *denos* = 'give us' (singular *usted* form), *dennos* = 'give us' (plural *ustedes* form), (*ustedes*) *dígannos* 'tell us'.

21.6 Third-person imperatives

Third-person imperative forms consisting of *que* + a 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 lo/le llamen a la oficina	'There's a phone call for your husband.' 'Then tell them to call him at his office'
¡Que trabaje tu PC! (*Computer Hoy*, Sp.)	Get your PC working!
Que ella los bañara, los vistiera, oyera sus preguntas, los enseñara a rezar y a creer en algo (AM, Mex., dialogue)	Let her bathe them, clothe them, listen to their questions, teach them to pray and believe in something
Que te sea leve	I hope it won't be too tough/Take it easy

Pronouns always precede the verb in this construction. See 37.4 for further remarks on the use of the conjunction *que*.

(1) 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!'), *¡no lo permita Dios!* 'God forbid!'. *¡sálvese quien pueda!* 'every man for himself!' (or woman: the Spanish version is not sexist), *¡viva/muera el presidente!* 'long live/death to the President!', *¡vivan los novios!* 'here's to the bride and groom!'

(2) This construction must not be confused with *que* + subjunctive meaning 'that' or 'the fact that': *¡que me diga usted eso a estas alturas!* 'that you should tell me that at this stage of the business/now we've got this far!'; see 20.3.19.

21.7 Second-person imperatives preceded by *que*

An imperative can be formed from a second-person subjunctive preceded by *que*. This makes the order more emphatic or presents it as a reminder:

¡Que pases un buen fin de semana!	Have a good weekend
¡Que no pierdas el dinero!	Don't lose the money!
¡Que se diviertan!	Have a good time! (*ustedes*)

21.8 Impersonal imperatives (passive *se* imperatives)

It is possible to form an imperative with passive *se* or the *pasiva refleja*, the resulting construction having no exact equivalent in English. It is used in formal written Spanish to give instructions without directly addressing the reader:

Rellénese en mayúsculas	Fill out in capital letters (lit. 'let it be filled out . . .')
Tradúzcanse al castellano las siguientes frases	Translate the following phrases into Spanish
No obstante, permítansenos aquí algunas palabras (C. Sánchez López in *GDLE*)	However, may we be allowed to say a few words here
Cuézanse las patatas durante 15 minutos, córtense en rodajitas, déjense enfriar y cúbranse con mayonesa	Boil the potatoes for 15 minutes, cut them into slices, leave them to cool and cover them with mayonnaise

(1) Important: as the last three examples show, the verb agrees in number with the subject of the verb (in these cases with *frases*, *palabras* and *patatas*). There is a modern tendency to prefer the infinitive to this impersonal imperative. See the next section.

21.9 The infinitive used as an imperative

The infinitive may be used as an imperative:

(**a**) In spoken European Spanish as a familiar alternative to the standard affirmative *vosotros* imperative ending in *-d*: *decirme la verdad = decidme la verdad* 'tell me the truth'. This is not accepted by all speakers but it is constantly heard. See 21.2.4 note 2 for discussion.

(**b**) Everywhere, as a brief, impersonal alternative to the *usted/ustedes* imperative, useful for public notices or instructions, e.g. in technical manuals or cookery books

Empujar (notice on doors, sometimes *empujen* or, in Spain, *empujad*)	Push
Poner los medallones en un plato, salsearlos, y acompañarlos con las bolitas de papa, zanahorias y un ramito de brócoli (*La Reforma*, Mex. *Papas = patatas* in Spain; *salsear = sazonar*, *brócoli = brécol*)	Put the medallions (of beef) on a plate, season them and serve them with the potato balls, carrots and a floret of broccoli
Descolgar y esperar. Percibirá una señal acústica continua y uniforme. No demorar el marcar (phone book, Sp., *marcar = discar* in many parts of Lat. Am.)	Lift receiver and wait. You will hear a continuous even tone. Do not delay dialling

(1) This use of the infinitive instead of the *usted*(*es*) form is controversial. Some grammarians reject it 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'; but affirmative forms are nowadays seen everywhere.

In speech, use of the infinitive for an imperative when speaking directly to someone may sound sub-standard. María Moliner says that *callarse todos* for *cállense todos* 'everybody be quiet' is not acceptable, but it is nevertheless very common in informal speech everywhere.

(2) *Haber* plus the past participle is often used to make a sarcastic, wise-after-the-event suggestion: *—Me arrepiento de haberla llamado—. Bueno, no haberlo hecho . . .* '"I regret calling her." "Well, you shouldn't have done it, should you?"', *—¡Vaya mojadura!— Haber traído el paraguas* '"What a soaking!" "You should have brought your umbrella, shouldn't you?"' This construction is called the *imperativo retrospectivo* in Spanish.

(3) With the preposition *a*, the infinitive may be used to give orders in informal styles:

—Todavía está sucio—. Bueno, a lavarlo otra vez (sounds colloquial without the *a*)	'It's still dirty' 'Well wash it again.'
—¡No tengo novio todavía! —Las ganas no te faltan. ¡A buscarlo! (AA, Cu., dialogue)	'I haven't got a boyfriend yet!' 'You're keen enough. Look for one!'
¡Todos a callar!	Be quiet everybody!
¡A dormir inmediatamente!	Go to sleep right now!

This type of imperative can include the speaker: *bueno, ahora a trabajar* 'OK, now let's get to work'.

(4) In Spain, an infinitive is nowadays often used to introduce the last point in radio or TV news items. This is surely not an imperative but an abbreviation of some phrase like *solo/sólo nos queda . . .* or *solo/sólo falta . . .* 'all that remains is to . . .': *y finalmente*, *añadir* (for *añadamos* 'let us add'?) *que esta/ésta no es la primera vez que el autor recibe un importante premio literario* 'and finally we should add that this isn't the first time that the author has received an important literary prize'. The Academy disapproves of this construction.

21.10 The present indicative used as an imperative

The present indicative is often used as an imperative in spoken Spanish, just as in English; cf. 'you're getting up right now and going to school'. In both languages this tends to be a no-nonsense imperative and, depending on intonation, it can be brusque to the point of rudeness:

Si tienes dinero, me lo das	If you've got money, give it to me
De acuerdo. No te guardo el sitio para mañana, pero pasado me haces dos páginas (CRG, Sp., dialogue; editor to journalist)	OK. I won't keep the space for you tomorrow, but the day after you do two pages for me
Nomás que oscurezca te vas por la carretera y tiras en una barranca el cuerpo de una muchacha que se murió (JI, Mex., dialogue. In Spain *nomás que* = *en cuanto* or *nada más* and *barranca* is *el barranco*)	As soon as it gets dark, you go down the road and you throw the body of a girl who died into a ravine

21.11 Ways of mellowing the imperative

There are numerous ways of making a request sound friendly, although in any language a politely-worded request can sound rude if the intonation is abrupt or irritable. Some ways of making a request sound more friendly 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?
¿Podrías hacerme el favor de no fumar?	Would you mind not smoking?

(**b**) Use *querer*. The conditional makes the imperative even milder:

¿Quieres decirme la verdad?	Would you mind telling me the truth?
¿Querrías (*hacerme el favor de*) *darle un recado a Pedro?*	Would you mind giving a message to Pedro?

(**c**) Use the phrase *a ver* 'let's see . . .':

A ver si vienes a verme más a menudo	Try to come and see me more often
A ver si me devuelves el dinero que te presté	Perhaps you could give me back the money I lent you

(**d**) Turn the request into a question:

¿Me pasas el agua (*por favor*)*?*	Pass the water please
¿Me pone con el 261-84-50 (*por favor*)? (See 11.17 for how to say telephone numbers)	Can you connect me to 261 8450 please?

(**e**) In Spain, use *tú* instead of *usted*, even to strangers: *ponme un tinto de verano* 'I'll have a "summer red wine"' (red wine diluted with soda water or lemonade). This is very widespread in Spain and appropriate between young people (say under forty) even when they are strangers, but it may sound over-familiar when said to older strangers and must not be used to people in authority. In Latin America *tú* is generally used less frequently between strangers.

(**f**) Add a diminutive suffix to the direct object noun:

This is a common way of making a request sound friendly. Compare *deme 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 friendlier, as in *fuimos a tomar unas copitas* 'we went and had a couple of drinks' (see 43.2.2 for more details).

(**g**) Add some tag like *¿eh?*, *¿puedes?*:

Vamos al cine, ¿quieres?/¿vale?	Let's go the cinema, okay?
Abre la puerta, ¿puedes?	Open the door would you
No chilles, ¿eh?	Stop screaming

21.12 Miscellaneous imperative constructions

Oye/Oiga (*usted*) (*por favor*) (lit. 'hear!')	Excuse me! (to call someone's attention)
No lo vuelvas a hacer/No vuelvas a hacerlo	Don't do it again
Mira lo que he comprado	Look what I bought
Fíjate en lo que me ha pasado	Look what happened to me
Imagínate qué disgusto	Imagine how upset I was (lit. 'imagine what displeasure')
Ténmelo/Téngamelo preparado	Have it ready for me
Trae que te lleve la bolsa (colloquial, Sp. only?)	Let me carry your bag
Trae aquí (colloquial, Sp. 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!
Vayan entrando	Start coming in

(1) In Spain the word *venga* has become a constantly used catch-phrase roughly meaning 'OK', 'fine': *venga, dáselo a papá* 'come on, give it to daddy', *venga, vámonos* 'OK, let's go', *venga, te llamo mañana* 'OK, I'll call you tomorrow'. Constant use of *vale* for 'fine'/'OK', is noted by Latin Americans as being typical of the Spanish of Spain, where the word *OK* is not much used.

22 The infinitive

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- Verb + infinitive, e.g. *quiero ir*, *dice saber*, *trató de pasar*, etc. (Section 22.2)
- *La vi entrar*, *los oí decir*, etc. (Section 22.2.4)
- Infinitive after prepositions and subordinators (Section 22.3)
- *Antes de hacerlo* compared with *antes de que lo haga* (Section 22.3.2)
- *Comimos al llegar*, *al darnos cuenta . . .*, etc. (Section 22.3.3)
- Infinitive used in place of finite forms (e.g. *—¿Qué hacemos? —Esperar*; *cualquier cosa menos casarse*, etc.) (Section 22.4)
- Possible passive meaning of the Spanish infinitive (Section 22.5)
- The infinitive as a noun and the definite article with the infinitive (Sections 22.6–7)
- *Es difícil de hacer* compared with *es difícil hacerlo* (Section 22.10)
- *Total a pagar*, *un punto a tener en cuenta* (Section 22.13)

22.1 Summary

Spanish infinitives end in *-ar*, *-er* or *-ir*, e.g. *hablar*, *comer*, *vivir*. A few infinitives, e.g. *freír*, *reír*, *sonreír*, have an accent on the *i*. These are listed at 16.6.6.

The infinitive may act as a verb or noun. In the latter case it is masculine and usually singular: *fumar es mal**o** para la salud* 'smoking is bad for the health'. One must not use the gerund to translate this kind of English sentence: **fumando es malo para la salud* is not Spanish.

The Spanish infinitive can sometimes have a passive meaning as in *tres cartas sin terminar* 'three unfinished letters'. See 22.5.

The Spanish infinitive often takes suffixed personal pronouns, e.g. *antes de hacerlo* 'before doing it', *sin habérnoslo dado* 'without having given it to us'. When the infinitive is governed by a finite verb, position of the pronouns is often optional, as in *quiero verlo* and *lo quiero ver* 'I want to see it/him': see 14.3.4–5 and below at 22.2.2.

For the use of the infinitive as an imperative see 21.9. For *de* + infinitive to mean 'if . . .' as in *de haberlos visto los habríamos saludado* 'if we'd seen them we'd have said hello to them' see 29.8.3.

22.2 Infinitive governed by a verb

This section refers to constructions like *sabe nadar* '(s)he can swim', *te desafío a hacerlo* 'I challenge you to do it', *te oí decirlo* 'I heard you say it', etc. These have many parallels in English, but there are some surprises.

22.2.1 Replacement of finite subordinate verbs by an infinitive

Some verbs, particularly verbs meaning 'to say', 'to affirm', allow either an infinitive or *que* + a finite verb when the subjects are the same, e.g. *Juan dice conocerla* or *Juan dice que la conoce* 'Juan says that he knows her' (where Juan and 'he' are the same person). In such cases, use of the infinitive makes the sentence unambiguous in the third person, whereas *Juan dice que la conoce*

is ambiguous, i.e. it could also mean 'Juan says that he (someone else)/she/you know(s) her'. Compare these pairs:

Desmintieron que hubieran/hubiesen lanzado el misil	They denied that they'd launched the missile (i.e. themselves or someone else)
Desmintieron haber lanzado el misil	They denied launching the missile
Afirmaba que era francés	He claimed he was French (himself or someone else)
Afirmaba ser francés	He claimed to be French

Further examples:

Dijo llamarse Simón . . . tener 42 años, ser casado, mexicano y estar radicado en el Salto de la Tuxpana (JI, Mex. Imitates police report language)	He said he was called Simón, was 42, married, Mexican and lived in Salto de la Tuxpana
Había creído volverse loco, pensado en matarse (MVLl, Pe.)	He had imagined he was going mad, thought about killing himself
La información . . . revela ser falsa (CF, Mex., dialogue)	The information turns out to be false
Reconoció/Confesó haberlo hecho	(S)he confessed to having done it

and similarly with *admitir* 'to admit', *recordar/acordarse de* 'to remember', *ocultar* 'to hide' *olvidar* 'to forget'.

(1) Some verbs always take an infinitive because they can only have one subject: *se obstinaba en hacerlo* '(s)he insisted on doing it', *tienden a abstenerse* 'they tend to abstain'.

(2) 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 *que*s: *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'.

(3) The past equivalent of the infinitive is made with *haber* + past participle: *dice haberlo comprado hace meses* '(s)he says that (s)he bought it months ago'.

(4) Despite the clarity of the infinitive construction, it tends to be confined to formal styles and the ambiguous construction with *que* is more usual in everyday language. One is more likely to say *dicen que lo saben* than *dicen saberlo* for 'they say they know it'.

22.2.2 Verbs followed by the infinitive

The following list shows some common verbs that are followed by an infinitive. French equivalents are supplied in some cases to remind students of that language to avoid all-too-frequent blunders like **intentar de hacer algo* for *intentar hacer algo* (French *essayer* ***de*** *faire quelquechose*) 'to try to do something'. Where no preposition is shown the verb is followed by an infinitive alone, as in *anhelaban hacerlo* 'they longed/yearned to do it'. Some verbs may be used either with the infinitive or with *que* plus a subjunctive as explained at 20.3.8.

Selection of verbs followed by infinitive

Verbs preceded by § may be followed by an infinitive even when the subject of the infinitive is not the subject of the finite verb, as in *yo le aconsejé a Roberto no hacerlo* 'I advised Roberto not to do it'. See 20.3.8c for details.

Verbs marked with an asterisk allow pronoun shifting: see note 1. This list has caused us many headaches, the problem being that some shifted forms are widely heard but may be popular or colloquial and unacceptable to careful speakers. For example, *hay que hacerlo* is normal but the shifted form, ??*lo hay que hacer* is popular though widespread. We have not marked all of these doubtful cases with an asterisk.

abstenerse de to refrain from
*acabar de**: i.e. *acabo de verla* or *la acabo de ver* 'I've just seen her/it/you'
*acabar por** to end by
acercarse a/para to approach (Fr. *s'approcher de*)
aceptar to accept
*acertar a** to manage to/to succeed
§*aconsejar** to advise (Fr. *conseiller de*)
acordar to agree to
acordarse de to remember (cf. *recordar.* See note 4)
*acostumbrar a** to be accustomed to
§*acusar de* to accuse of
afanarse por to do one's best to
afirmar to claim/to state
alcanzar a * to manage to: *lo alcancé a ver* 'I managed to see it'
amenazar (con) to threaten to (Fr. *menacer de*): *amenazó matarlo/le* or *con matarlo/le*
anhelar to long to
§*animar a* to encourage to
ansiar to long to
aparentar to seem to
*aprender a** to learn to: the shifted form is colloquial
apresurarse a to hasten to
arrepentirse de to regret/to repent
arriesgarse a to risk
asegurar to assure
atreverse a to dare to (cf. Fr. *oser faire*)
§*autorizar a/para* to authorize to
avergonzarse de to be ashamed of
ayudar a to help to
bajar a to go down to: *bajé a verla* 'I went down to see her'
brindarse a to offer to
buscar to seek to (Fr. *chercher à*)
cansarse de to tire of
ceñirse a to limit oneself to
cesar de to cease
*comenzar a** to begin to
comenzar por to start by
comprometerse a to undertake to
conceder to concede to
§*condenar a* to condemn to
§*conducir a* to lead to
confesar to confess
*conseguir** to succeed in
consentir en to agree to (Fr. *consentir à*)
consistir en to consist of
contribuir a to contribute to
convenir to be appropriate
convenir en to agree to
§*convidar a* to invite to
creer to believe
cuidar de to take care to
§*culpar de* to blame someone for
*deber** must. See 25.3
decidir to decide to (Fr. *décider de*)
decidirse a to make up one's mind to
decir tell (i.e. order; Fr. *dire de*) also 'say'. See 20.3.7
declarar to declare
dedicarse a to dedicate oneself to
§*dejar** to let/to allow: *le dejó hacerlo* or *se lo dejó hacer* '(s)he let him/her do it';
*dejar de** to leave off/to give up
demostrar to demonstrate (more usually with *que* + finite verb)
§*desafiar a* to challenge to (Fr. *défier de*)
*desear** to desire/to wish to. *Lo deseo ver* is colloquial.
desesperar de to despair of
desvivirse por to do one's utmost to
dignarse (*a*) to deign to
disponerse a to get ready to
§*disuadir de* to dissuade from
divertirse en to amuse oneself by (usually with gerund; Fr. *s'amuser à*)
dudar en to hesitate over (Fr. *hésiter à*)
elegir to choose to
empeñarse en to insist on
empecinarse en to insist on
*empezar a** to begin to
empezar por to start by
encargarse de to take charge of
enseñar a to show how to/teach
§*enviar a* to send to
esforzarse por/en to strive to (Fr. *s'efforcer de*)
esperar to hope/expect/wait to
evitar to avoid (Fr. *éviter de*)
fingir to pretend to
§*forzar a* to force to
guardarse de to take care not to
gustar de to like to (but usually *le gusta fumar*, etc.)
haber que 'to be necessary to'. See 25.4.2 note 1
habituarse a to get used to
§*hacer* to make (*la hizo callar*, etc.)
hartarse de to tire of
imaginar to imagine
§*impedir** to prevent from . . . (Fr. *défendre de*)
imponer to oblige to
§*impulsar a* to urge to
§*incitar a* to incite to
§*inclinarse a* to incline to
§*inducir a* to induce/persuade to
insistir en to insist on (Fr. *insister pour*)

§*instar a* to urge to
*intentar** to try to (Fr. *essayer de*): *lo intentaron hacer* is more colloquial than *intentaron hacerlo*
interesarse en (or *por*) to take interest in (Fr. *s'intéresser à*)
§*invitar a* to invite to
*ir a** to go to (*esto va a hacerse pronto* 'this will be done soon')
jactarse de to boast of
jurar to swear to
lamentar to regret to
limitarse a to limit oneself to
*llegar a** to go so far as to . . . (the unshifted form is much more usual)
llevar a to lead to
*lograr** to succeed in
luchar por struggle to
§*mandar** to order to (Fr. *ordonner de*)
§*mandar a* to order (to do something)
manifestar to state/to declare (usually with *que . . .*)
maravillarse de to marvel at
merecer to deserve to
meterse a to start to
molestarse en to bother to
*necesitar** to need to: *lo necesitamos hacer is* colloquial
negar to deny (*negarse a* refuse to)
§*obligar a* to oblige to (Fr. *obliger de*)
obstinarse en to insist obstinately on (Fr. *s'obstiner à*)
ofrecer to offer (usually with *que . . .*)
*oír** to hear. See 22.2.4
olvidar to forget;
olvidarse de, *olvidársele*; to forget. See 30.7.26
optar (usually *optar por*) to opt to
§*ordenar* to order to (Fr. *ordonner de*)
parar de to stop
parecer to seem to
pasar a to go on to
pasar de to be uninterested in
§*pedir* to ask to (Fr. *demander à*, *demander de*). See 20.3.9
pensar pienso hacerlo* 'I plan to do it'
pensar en to think of (Fr. *penser à*)
§*permitir** to allow to (Fr. *permettre de*)
persistir en to persist in (Fr. *persister à*)
*poder** to be able to
ponerse a to start to
precipitarse a to rush to
preferir to prefer to
prepararse a to get ready to
presumir de to boast about
pretender to claim to/to try to
proceder a to proceed to
procurar to try hard to
§*prohibir* to prohibit from (Fr. *défendre de*)
prometer to promise to (Fr. *promettre de*)
quedar en to agree to
*querer** to want to
§*recomendar* to recommend that
reconocer to acknowledge (more usually with *que*)
recordar to remember to (see note 4)
rehuir to shun/to avoid
rehusar to refuse to (Fr. *refuser de*)
renunciar a to renounce
§*reprochar* to reproach for
resignarse a to resign oneself to
resistirse a to resist
resultar to turn out to be
resolver to resolve to (Fr. *résoudre de*)
*saber** to know how to
sentir to regret/to be sorry for
*soler**: *solía hacerlo* '(s)he habitually did it' (see 25.6)
solicitar to apply to
soñar con to dream of (Fr. *rêver de*)
tardar en to be late in/to be a long time in (Fr. *tarder à*)
temer to fear to
*tender a** to tend to: sometimes shifted colloquially
*tener que** to have to
§*tentar a* to tempt to
terminar de to finish
*tratar de** try to; but *lo trató de hacer* is colloquial
vacilar en to hesitate over
venir de to come from . . .
*ver** to see. See 22.2.4
ver de to try to
volver a (*hacer*)* to (do) again. See 36.6
votar por to vote for

(1) An asterisk marks verbs that allow pronoun shifting: one can say *acabo de hacerlo* or *lo acabo de hacer* 'I've just done it', *pienso mudarme mañana* or *me pienso mudar mañana* 'I'm thinking of moving tomorrow'. Pronoun shifting is discussed in detail at 14.3.4–5.

(2) Verbs of motion, e.g. *salir*, *bajar*, *ir*, *volver*, *entrar*, *acercar*(*se*), always take *a* before an infinitive: *bajó a verla* '(s)he went down to see her', *entraron a saludar al profesor* 'they went in to say hello to the teacher', etc. When the subjects are not identical, *a que* or *para que* + subjunctive is required: *bajó a/para que la vieran/viesen* 'she went down so they could see her'.

(3) 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 22.6–7.

(4) The construction is *me acuerdo* ***de*** *haberlo visto* or *recuerdo haberlo visto* 'I remember seeing him/it'. *Recordarse* can only mean 'to remember oneself', as in *me recuerdo como un niño muy tímido* 'I remember myself as a very timid child'. *Recordarse* for 'to remember' is heard in familiar Latin-American speech but it is avoided in careful styles and is considered incorrect in Spain.

22.2.3 Verbs of permitting and forbidding, and other verbs constructed with an indirect object

Most, but not all, verbs that can be constructed with an indirect object, e.g. ***les*** *permití hacerlo/****les*** *permití que lo hicieran* 'I let them do it', allow either a subjunctive or an infinitive construction. They are discussed at 20.3.8c.

(1) It is worth repeating here that when used with the infinitive, verbs of obliging, prohibiting and permitting can appear without an object pronoun in Spanish but not in English: *esto prohíbe pensar que . . .* 'this prohibits **one** from thinking that . . .'. See 20.3.8 note 2.

22.2.4 Infinitive after verbs of perception like 'to see', 'to hear', 'to remember'

The infinitive is used after verbs like *ver*, *oír*, *recordar* to denote a completed action; an incomplete action is indicated by the gerund. English makes the same distinction: compare *lo/le vi fumar un puro* 'I saw him smoke a cigar' (and finish it) and *lo/le vi fumando un puro* 'I saw him smoking a cigar'. See 24.6–7 for more examples.

The word order with an intransitive infinitive is as follows: *vi entrar a Marta* 'I saw Marta come in', where Marta is the direct object of *ver* and the subject of *entrar*. *Vi a Marta entrar* is also found but more often in literary styles. But with transitive infinitives the order is Subject-Infinitive-Noun, i.e. *vimos a Roberto comprar unas flores* 'we saw Robert buy some flowers':

Te vi entrar	I saw you come in
Te lo vi firmar	I saw you sign it
Notábamos entrar a varias personas de aspecto sospechoso	We noticed several suspicious-looking people entering
Millones vieron una manzana caer, pero solo Newton se preguntó por qué (*El Economista*, Mex.)	Millions saw/had seen an apple fall, but only Newton asked why
Vi a Beatriz Noguera suplicar ante la puerta de Muriel (JM, Sp.)	I saw Beatriz Noguera pleading at Muriel's door
No he oído nunca aullar a un lobo, pero sé que era un lobo (JLB, Arg., dialogue)	I've never heard a wolf howl, but I know it was a wolf
Marés sentía desintegrarse día a día su personalidad (JMs, Sp.)	Marés felt his personality disintegrating day by day
Se lo oí decir	I heard her/him/you (*usted/es*)/them say it
Quiero escucháselo decir (RB, Ch., dialogue)	I want to hear you (*usted*) say it

(1) Important: the crucial 'rule of two *l*'s' explained at 14.9 means that if a third-person pronoun is optionally shifted leftwards in this construction, the first pronoun, if it begins with *l*, becomes *se*: *la vi firmarlo* 'I saw her sign it' > ***se*** *lo vi firmar*, *lo/le oí confesarlo* > 'I heard him confess it' > ***se*** *lo oí confesar*, *los vi hacerlo* > ***se*** *lo vi hacer.*

(2) Important: the Spanish infinitive can be active or passive in meaning, so a passive may be required in the English translation: *nunca la oí nombrar* 'I've never heard her mention**ed**', *vio*

detener a varios manifestantes '(s)he saw several demonstrators arrest**ed**'. See 22.5. This occasionally causes ambiguity. *Vi matar a dos leones* could out of context mean either 'I saw two lions kill**ed**' or 'I saw two lions kill', the first meaning being more likely.

22.3 Infinitive after prepositions and subordinators

22.3.1 Infinitive after prepositions

Important: the infinitive is used after prepositions and prepositional phrases: *fue la primera en* ***enterarse*** 'she was the first to find out', *estoy harto de decírtelo* 'I'm tired of telling you', *reprende a la banca por arriesgarse* (*El País*, Sp.) 'he reproaches the banks for taking risks', *un líquido para quitar las manchas* 'a liquid to remove stains', *un abrigo sin estrenar* 'an unworn coat', etc. Prepositions are **never** used before a Spanish gerund: ***estoy harto de diciéndotelo* is not Spanish (for an archaic exception to this rule see 24.5).

22.3.2 Choice between the infinitive and *que* + finite verb

An infinitive construction is possible after the subordinators listed in section 20.4.2 e.g. *hasta* 'until', *para* 'in order to', *sin* 'without', *nada más* 'as soon as', and those consisting of phrases that require the word *de que* before a finite verb, e.g. *antes de* (*que*) 'before', *después de* (*que*) 'after', *el hecho de* (*que*) 'the fact that', etc.

Foreign students should apply the following rule: use the infinitive with these subordinators only if the subject of the following 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 different, the subjunctive or indicative must be used (although the rule is applied loosely with *antes de* and *después de*), the choice being determined by the rules laid out at 20.4.1. 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, however, mean 'as soon as I finish this' or 'as soon as (s)he finishes/you finish . . .'. Further examples:

Lo haré después de comer	I'll do it after I've had lunch
Lo haré después de que hayas comido	I'll do it after you've had lunch
Entré sin verte	I entered without seeing you
Entré sin que tú me vieras/vieses	I entered without you seeing me
Se fue antes de contestar	(S)he left before answering
Se fue antes de que yo contestase/contestara	(S)he left before I answered
Enfermó (Lat. Am. *se enfermó*) *por no comer*	(S)he fell sick from not eating

(1) Spontaneous language quite often uses an infinitive construction with these subordinators even when the subjects are not identical. Thus. *vino a los tres días de que te fueras tú* '(s)he arrived three days after you left' is correct, but *vino a los tres días de irte tú* (ABV, Sp., dialogue) is constantly heard. The *GDLE* 27.2.1 describes *no es conveniente marcharte sin despedirte* as 'careless' for *no es conveniente que te marches sin despedirte* 'it's not right for you to leave without saying goodbye'. Further examples:

?*Le miraba sin él darse cuenta* (JMs, Sp., dialogue: *sin que él se diese/diera cuenta*)	He watched him without him realizing
?*¿Te voy a ver antes de irte?* (Spanish informant, i.e. . . . *antes de que te vayas*)	Am I going to see you before you go?
¿Me podés comprar postales para mandar yo? (Argentine informant, i.e. *para que yo las mande*; Sp. *puedes* for *podés*)	Could you buy me some postcards for me to send?

(2) If the infinitive construction is used, the best order is preposition + infinitive + subject, as in *me fui antes de llegar tú* 'I left before you arrived'. One hears the order preposition + subject + infinitive in very informal speech, as in ?*para él hablar así, tenía que estar borracho* 'he must have been drunk for him to talk like that' (from *GDLE* 36.3.4), ?*es decir que había comprado marfil para usted vender* (*VdC*, Cu. for . . . *para que usted lo vendiera/vendiese*) 'in other words he had bought ivory for you to sell'. The *NGLE* 26.7i says that this latter order is frequent in Caribbean Spanish, but it is also heard frequently elsewhere, cf. Spain *¡para él decir eso!* 'fancy him saying that!'.

(3) Note, that when looking back in time, one can use either the present or perfect infinitive after a preposition: *después de haber sido/de ser declarado inocente* 'after having been/being declared innocent', *luego de haber instalado/de instalar el programa, mi PC se me colgó* 'after installing the programme my PC crashed'.

22.3.3 *Al* + infinitive

This means the same as the English 'on' + the -ing form of a verb: *noté el perfume al entrar* 'I noticed the perfume on entering', i.e. 'when I entered'. The Spanish construction is very common on both continents:

Se alegró al enterarse	(S)he was happy when (s)he found out
Al fumarlo los indios experimentaban una especie de éxtasis (*El País*, Sp.)	When they smoked it the Indians experienced a sort of ecstasy
Al terminar el bachillerato Gladys pasó a un organismo estatal (MP, Arg.)	After finishing her baccalaureate Gladys moved to a government organization
Se detuvo un instante sorprendido, al ver de nuevo los rasgos olvidados del conserje (CF, Mex.)	He stopped for a moment, surprised to see again the forgotten features of the janitor

(1) This construction can also mean 'because': *al no ser morales, los animales no deben actuar de acuerdo con ciertos valores* (*La Nación*, Arg.) 'since they are not moral beings, animals do not have to act according to certain values', *una tecnología que no representa ningún riesgo para la población y el entorno, al no producir residuos* (*Granma*, Cu.) 'technology that presents no risk to the population or environment since it produces no waste'.

(2) In theory, *al* + infinitive ought to be used only when the subjects are the same, as in *al despedirme le dije a uno de los dos . . .* 'as I said goodbye I said to one of the two of them . . .', but sentences like *al despedirme uno de los dos me dijo* (JLB, Arg., dialogue, different subjects) 'as I left one of the two said to me', *al llegar a la puerta principal ya lo esperaba la madre superiora*. (MS, Mex.) 'when he got to the main door the Mother Superior was already waiting for him', are very common in relaxed styles.

(3) The conditional meaning of this construction is, according to *NGLE* 26.13j, confined to Mexico, Central America and the Andes region: *al ganar la lotería me mudaría a la capital* 'if I won the lottery I'd move to the capital' (for *si ganara/ganase . . .*). This conditional use is avoided in Spain.

22.4 Replacement of finite forms of a verb by an infinitive

The infinitive rather than a finite verb may be used in the following circumstances:

(**a**) To give an abrupt response to a question, as one does when the answer is obvious:

—¿Qué hacemos ahora? —Esperar	'What do we do now?' 'Wait'
—¿Pero se puede saber que está usted	'But do you mind saying what you're

haciendo? —¡Sacar a mi mujer! (EA, Sp., dialogue)	doing?' 'Getting my wife out!'

(**b**) After *más que*, *menos*, *excepto*:

Yo siempre sospeché que había algo después de la muerte. Más que sospecharlo, lo sabía, casi con seguridad (JJM, Pan., dialogue)	I always suspected that there was something after death. More than suspect it, I knew it, almost as a certainty
. . . ojos que más que mirar, retan (EA, Sp.)	. . . eyes that rather than look, challenge
Más que proteger a la naturaleza, los zapatistas manifiestan su identidad con ella (JV, Mex.)	The Zapatistas identify with nature rather than protect it
. . . todo, menos/excepto volver a escribirlo	. . . anything, except write it again

(**c**) For naming or listing actions, as in:

. . . y esto es lo que hacen los campesinos: arar, plantar, podar, regar	. . . and this is what peasants do: ploughing /US plowing, planting, pruning, watering
¿Sabéis/Saben lo que yo hago después de que vosotros os habéis ido/ustedes se han ido a casa? Trabajar	Do you know what I do after you've gone home? Work

(**d**) In indignant or sarcastic statements and questions like *¿para qué servirle carne a un vegetariano?* 'what's the point of serving meat to a vegetarian?' See 22.9.

22.5 Infinitive: passive or active?

The Spanish infinitive may have a passive meaning, especially after *sin*, *por*, *a* and *para*. This has no counterpart in English:

Esto aún está por ver	This is still to be seen
una cerveza sin abrir	an unopened beer
Pasaba el tiempo sin sentir (CMG, Sp.)	Time passed unnoticed
En su recámara había cuatro maletas a medio hacer (AM, Mex., dialogue; *recámara = habitación* in Spain)	In her room there were four half-packed suitcases
Transcurrieron años sin tener noticias de lo ocurrido	Years passed without (lit. 'without having') news of what had happened being received
. . . trabajos para hacer por el estudiante	. . . work to be done (lit. 'to do') by the student

(1) After adjectival phrases like *digno de* 'worthy of', *imposible de*, *difícil de*, *fácil de* the infinitive may appear with or without 'passive *se*': *el diseño del panel frontal es digno de tener*(*se*) *en cuenta* 'the design of the front panel is worth noting', *este tipo de tumor es difícil de observar*(*se*) *microscópicamente* 'this type of tumour is difficult to observe under the microscope', *es algo imposible de imaginar*(*se*) 'it's something that's impossible to imagine'. One could also use the passive with *ser*: *. . . digno de ser tenido en cuenta, . . . difícil de ser observado.*

22.6 Infinitive as a noun

The infinitive may function as a noun, in which case it is sometimes translated by an English -ing form. Used as a noun, an infinitive is always masculine and usually singular:

Mañana me toca lavar el coche	It's my turn to wash the car tomorrow
aquel fluir movedizo de los colores (CMG, Sp.)	that shifting flow of the colours . . .
mejor no hacerlo	Best not do it
Odio ordenar	I hate sorting/tidying
un atolondrado ir y venir	a mad coming and going
Sólo cuesta 20,000 pesos construir este auto (*Excélsior*, Mex. *Este coche* in Spain. In most Spanish-speaking countries 20,000 is written 20.000)	This car costs only 20,000 pesos to build

22.7 Definite article before the infinitive

The definite article is used before the infinitive:

(**a**) in the common construction *al* + infinitive: *tómese una pastilla al acostarse* 'take a pill on going to bed'. See 22.3.3 for discussion.

(**b**) When the infinitive is qualified by an adjective or by a noun phrase joined to the infinitive, often by the preposition *de*:

Oyó el agitado girar de una cucharilla contra un vaso (LG, Sp.)	He heard the agitated grating of a teaspoon against a glass
Cristina escuchó el percutir de las gotas de la ducha sobre los azulejos (LO, Cu.)	Cristina listened to the patter of drops from the shower on the tiles
con el andar de los años	as the years passed by
. . . por el solo haberse enamorado de Josefa con mirarla (AM, Mex.)	. . . just because of having fallen in love with Josefa from looking at her

(**c**) In other cases when the infinitive is used as a noun, the definite article seems to be optional, although it is less common in informal styles, e.g. *comer es como tomar. En exceso hace daño* (EP Mex., dialogue. *Tomar* here = *beber alcohol* in Spain) 'eating is like drinking. In excess it causes harm', *vivir con un hombre equivale a trabajar 7 horas extras* (*Excélsior*, Mex.) 'living with a man is the equivalent of working seven extra hours'. The article is, however, quite often retained when the infinitive is the subject of a verb. In all the following examples the *el* before the infinitive could be omitted, although in the examples it was used. Omission of the article *el* would make the style slightly less literary:

Paula no pudo evitar (*el*) *reírse* (JJP, Sp.)	Paula couldn't help laughing
(*El*) *estar sin móvil, para mí, va a suponer algo horrible* (interview, *La Sexta*, Sp.)	Being without a mobile/cell phone will mean something horrible for me
Como si . . . estimaran prudente (*el*) *estar preparados para salir a la calle afrontando el frío* (RB, Ch.)	As if they thought it prudent to be ready to go out into the street and face the cold
G. nunca pudo perdonar a Heisenberg (*el*) *no haber hecho lo suficiente para salvarlos* (JV, Mex.)	G. was never able to forgive Heisenberg for not having done enough to save them

The article is obligatory when an infinitive is followed by *de* when the phrase is the subject of a verb: *el crujir de los dientes es un síntoma . . .*'grinding of teeth is a symptom . . .', *el trinar de los pájaros le confortaba* 'the warbling of the birds comforted him'. In other cases, the use of *de* shows that the infinitive is used as a noun rather than as a verb. Compare *oía crujir las ramas* '(s)he heard the branches creaking'(verb) and *oía el crujir de las ramas* '(s)he heard the creak(ing) of the branches' (noun). In both cases a noun could have been used, e.g. *el trino* and *el crujido*.

(**d**) The article is required in some constructions involving *en*:

La moda en el vestir influye en la moda del maquillaje	Fashion in dressing influences fashion in make-up
Algunos españoles son un poco enfáticos en el hablar	Some Spaniards are rather ponderous in their manner of speaking
Lo/le conocí en el andar	I recognized him from his way of walking

(**e**) The indefinite article *un* is also found before infinitives:

en un abrir y cerrar de ojos	in the wink of an eye
Después de dos años de un agitado avanzar por el camino de la libertad . . .	after two years of agitated progress along the road to liberty . . .
. . . siluetas, grupos, en un ir y venir sin prisas (MVLl, Pe.)	. . . silhouettes, groups, unhurriedly coming and going

22.8 Infinitive as an imperative

The use of the infinitive as an imperative form, as in *calentar el aceite en una cazuela, freír las habas, luego las patatas* 'heat the oil in a casserole dish, fry the beans and then the potatoes', is discussed at 21.9.

22.9 'Rhetorical' infinitive

The infinitive may be used in rhetorical questions or to express disbelief, indignation or sarcasm:

¡Pagar yo cien mil por eso!	Me pay 100,000 for that!
¡Enamorarme yo a mis años!	Me fall in love at my age!
Pero, ¿cómo abrirlo sin llave?	But how do you open it without a key?
Pero no tiene sentido, si es en hebreo ¿por qué usar caracteres griegos? (MC, Mex., dialogue)	But it doesn't make sense. If it's in Hebrew why use Greek letters?
¿Por qué condenar el proyecto estrella de toda una gestión presidencial? (*Vértice,* ES)	Why condemn the star project of a whole presidential initiative?

and also after words like *¿dónde?* and *¿para qué?*: *¿(a)dónde ir?* 'where on earth shall we go?', *¿para qué insistir?* 'why insist?'

(1) The *NGLE* 26.14j notes the Mexican expression *ni modo de*: *ni modo de pedirle plata* (i.e. *dinero*) 'no point asking him for money'. Elsewhere *ni hablar de . . .* means the same thing.

(2) In Spain *venga a* + infinitive expresses the idea of tiresome repetition: *y él venga a pedirme que me case con él* 'and he keeps on and on asking me to marry him'.

22.10 Adjective + *de* + infinitive

Es difícil aprender español 'it is difficult to learn Spanish' differs from *el español es difícil* ***de*** *aprender* 'Spanish is difficult to learn'. In the first sentence the subject of *es* is *aprender* and *de* is not used when the infinitive is the subject': *no es fácil creerlo* 'it isn't easy to believe it', *parece difícil solucionar tal problema* 'it seems difficult to solve such a problem', *resulta imposible comprobar que . . .* 'it is impossible to prove that . . .'.

But when the infinitive is not the subject, *de* must be used (subject in bold, but it may be implicit in the Spanish verb): (***eso***) *es difícil de averiguar* 'that is difficult to check/confirm', *para este Día del Padre sorprenda a papá con un delicioso menú fácil y rápido de elaborar* (*La Reforma*, Mex.) 'for today, Father's Day, surprise father with a delicious menu that's easy and quick to prepare', *resulta difícil de definir* '**it** is difficult to define', *ciertos movimientos difíciles de imitar* 'certain movements (that were/are) difficult to imitate'.

22.11 Infinitive preceded by *que*

The following constructions must be noted, particularly by students of French: cf. *j'ai beaucoup à faire*, *il n'y a rien à manger*, etc.:

Tengo muchas cosas que hacer/decir	I've got a lot of things to do/say
Voy a comprar algo que/para leer	I'm going to buy something to read
Dame algo que/para hacer	Give me something to do
Eso nos ha dado bastante que hacer	This has given us enough to do
Te queda mucho que ver en este mundo	You've a lot left to see in this world
No tiene mucho que ver con este problema	It hasn't got a lot to do with this problem

But this construction with *que* cannot be used with verbs of needing, requesting, searching:

Necesito algo para comer	I need something to eat
Quiero algo para beber	I want something to drink
Pidió algo para (or *con que*) *calmar su dolor de muelas*	(S)he asked for something to soothe his/her toothache
Busco algo para . . .	I'm looking for something to . . .

22.12 *No tengo qué comer, no sabía dónde ir,* etc.

This construction is similar to English:

No tenían qué comer	They had nothing to eat
Había sitios a donde ir a bailar (JA, Mex.)	There were places to go dancing
No encontró dónde cambiar dólares (ibid.)	He didn't find anywhere to change dollars

(1) In the first example the accent on *qué* is crucial: cf. *no tenían que comer* 'they didn't have to/need to eat'. In the third example, it can be omitted from *dónde*. But *yo no sabía dónde pasar la noche* 'I didn't know where to spend the night' is clearly an indirect question, so *dónde* requires an accent. See Chapter 28 for more details.

22.13 *El problema a resolver, un argumento a tener en cuenta,* etc.

This combination of a noun + *a* + an infinitive in phrases like *el problema a resolver* 'the problem to be solved' is controversial. *El País*, *Libro de estilo* 2014, 13.8, condemns it, but Seco (1998), 5, welcomes its brevity and points out that it is not identical 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 expressions 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 *NGLE* 26.6l, says of this construction that 'a pesar de su extensión, posee escaso prestigio en el español actual'. However, *es un dato a tener en cuenta* 'it is a point to be borne in mind' appears in the Academy's own *GDLE*, p.1785.

The construction with *a* is more widely accepted in Latin America; cf. *los uniformados presentaron hace poco un nuevo texto a ser considerado* (*Abc Color*, Par.) 'the military recently presented a new text for consideration'.

23 Participles

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- Main uses of the past participle – *hablado*, *vivido*, *hecho*, etc. (Section 23.1)
- Forms of regular and irregular past participles (Section 23.2)
- Past participles as adjectives (Section 23.3)
- Translating '(s)he was sitting', 'they were crouching' etc. (Section 23.4)
- Participle clauses (e.g. 'the meeting **having ended**, they left') (Section 23.5)
- Adjectival or present participles ending in *-ante*, – (*i*)*ente*, e.g. *inquietante* 'worrying', *convincente*,'convincing', *perteneciente* 'belonging' (Section 23.6)

23.1 Past participles: general

Past participles – *hablado*, *vivido*, *dicho*, *hecho*, etc.– have several uses:

(**a**) they are used with *haber* to form the compound tenses of verbs: *ha hablado* '(s)he has spoken', *yo la había visto* 'I had seen her'. See Chapter 18.

(**b**) They are occasionally used with *tener* or *llevar* to emphasize the idea of acquiring or accumulating things or actions, as in *tengo compradas las entradas* 'I've bought the entrance tickets', *llevo tomados tres somníferos* 'I've taken three sleeping tablets'. See 18.1.3 for discussion.

(**c**) They are used to form the passive: *fue impreso/a* 'it was printed', *fueron observados/observadas* 'they were observed'. The passive is discussed in Chapter 32.

(**d**) They can function as adjectives: see 23.3.

23.2 Past participles: forms

23.2.1 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* (no accent!), *ir/ido*, *ser/sido*, etc. There are a few common irregular forms:

abrir: *abierto* (and *entreabrir*)
absolver (and all verbs ending in *-solver*): *absuelto*
cubrir (and all verbs ending in *-cubrir*): *cubierto*
decir* (and all verbs ending in *-decir): *dicho*
escribir (and all verbs ending in *-scribir*): *escrito*
satisfacer and other verbs ending in *-facer*: *satisfecho*
freír: *frito* (see note 2)
hacer: *hecho* (also *deshacer*, *contrahacer*, etc.)
imprimir: *impreso* (see note 2)
morir: *muerto* (see note 1)
poner (and all verbs ending in *-poner*): *puesto*
romper: *roto*
ver (and compounds like *prever*): *visto*
volver (and all verbs ending in *-volver*): *vuelto*

*See the next list for *maldecir*.

A few verbs have separate adjectival and verbal participles, cf. *está* ***despierto*** *porque lo/le he despertado* 'he's awake because I've woken him', *ahora que han* ***soltado*** *a los animales andan* ***sueltos*** 'now they've released the animals they're wandering around free', *el agua que ha* ***bendecido*** *un cura se llama agua* ***bendita*** 'the water that a priest has blessed is called Holy Water'. In the following list the verbal participle is shown first:

absorber: *absorbido/absorto* absorbed
bendecir: *bendecido/bendito* blessed
confesar: *confesado/confeso* confessed
confundir: *confundido/confuso* confused
despertar: *despertado/despierto* woken up
elegir: *elegido/electo* elected
maldecir: *maldecido/maldito* cursed
prender: *prendido/preso*. See note 3
proveer: *proveído/provisto* equipped with
soltar: *soltado/suelto* released
suspender: *suspendido/suspenso* failed (e.g. exams)/hanging

(1) *Muerto* is often used in literary styles as the passive past participle of *matar* 'to kill' when applied to human beings: *con el tiempo sería muerto por la Gestapo* (ES, Arg., interview; ordinary language *sería matado/lo mataría*) 'he was later to be killed by the Gestapo', but *unos bandidos habían* ***matado*** *a su padre* 'some bandits had killed his father'.

(2) *Freído* and *imprimido* are still heard as verbal participles of *freír* 'to fry' and *imprimir* 'to print'. *Frito*, *impreso* are usual nowadays and the Academy accepts both.

(3) *Prender* has numerous meanings, e.g. 'to capture/detain', 'to pin on', 'catch fire' and, in Latin America, 'to switch on' lights, etc., Spain *encender.*

23.2.2 Irregular past participles in Latin America

A number of irregular adjectival participles are widely used in Latin America. These forms are either obsolete in Spain or are used only in set phrases, e.g. *el presidente electo* 'the president elect', but they are used in Latin America – especially in Argentina – not only as adjectives but also to form passives, e.g. *resultó electo candidato a la presidencia* (AM, Mex.) 'he was elected as presidential candidate', Spain *salió elegido*. In the following list the standard form appears first:

convencer: *convencido/convicto* convinced
corromper: *corrompido/corrupto* corrupt
describir: *descrito/descripto* described
dividir: *dividido/diviso* divided
inscribir/inscrito/inscripto registered/enrolled
prescribir: *prescrito/prescripto* prescribed

Ocurre en las regiones antárticas descriptas con extraordinaria vividez . . . (JLB, Arg., Sp. *descritas*)
It happens in the Antarctic regions described with extraordinary vividness . . .

Incluye todos los shampoos prescriptos por médicos (*Gente*, Arg., Sp. *recetados/prescritos*, *champús*)
It includes all the shampoos prescribed by doctors

El autor de los disparos estaba inscripto al curso (*La Jornada*, Mex. Sp. *inscrito en . . .*)
The person who fired the shots was enrolled on the course

. . . escritores que fueron conservadores convictos (MVLl, Pe., Sp. *Convencidos. Convicto* = 'convicted' in Spain)
. . . writers who were convinced conservatives

(1) Latin Americans may reject the use of the regular participles in such sentences, but the usual forms are quite common everywhere, especially in finite past tenses: *ella no había elegido al jefe del Ejército* (MSQ, Arg.) 'she hadn't chosen the head of the Army', *los políticos no están convencidos de esta "verdad profunda"* (ibid.) 'the politicians are not convinced of this "profound truth"'.

(2) Both *una sociedad corrompida* and *una sociedad corrupta* 'a corrupt society' are heard in Spain. *Corrupto* is usual in Latin America.

23.2.3 Object pronouns and participles

For the now obsolete construction *había comprado la casa y pintádola* for *había comprado la casa y la había pintado* 'he had bought the house and painted it', see 14.3.7 note 2.

23.3 Past participles as adjectives

23.3.1 Adjectival participles

When they are used as adjectives, past participles agree in number and gender like any adjective: *una exagerada reacción* 'an exaggerated reaction', *la gestación subrogada* 'surrogate pregnancy', *huevos revueltos* 'scrambled eggs', etc. These adjectival past participles can sometimes be converted into nouns by the use of a determiner (see Glossary): *un muerto* 'a dead person', *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 provide neat translations of English relative clauses: *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?'

23.3.2 Unexpected meaning of some past participles and some adjectives ending in *-do*

Some adjective and participles ending in *-do* confuse foreign learners since they seem to have two meanings, the first adjectival and the second as a verbal participle. *Reducido* is notorious: *una cantidad reducida* is 'a *small* quantity', not a 'reduced' quantity, but *la cantidad ha sido reducida* is 'the quantity has been reduced'.

Other examples are *acusado* 'clearly visible' or 'accused', *ajustado* 'tight' or 'adjusted', *alargado* 'long' or 'lengthened', *alejado* 'remote' or 'distanced', *aprovechado* 'opportunistic' or 'made use of', *cuidado* 'careful'/'painstaking' or 'looked after', *elevado* 'high' (e.g. number/quantity) or 'raised', *honrado* 'honest' or 'honoured', *recogido* 'timid' or 'picked up', *retirado* 'remote' or 'withdrawn'/'retired'.

(1) The *NGLE* 27.10g notes regional survivals on both continents of older participle forms, e.g. *pago* 'paid', *calmo* 'calm(ed), *canso* 'tired', *nublo* 'cloudy', *pinto* 'painted', *quito* 'removed', nowadays replaced by *pagado*, *calmado*, *cansado*, *nublado*, *pintado*, *quitado*. These forms are found in pre-eighteenth-century literature.

23.4 'She was sitting on the couch', etc.

Important: English-speakers constantly wrongly translate such sentences by using a Spanish gerund when a participle is needed: *estaba* ***sentada*** *en el sofá* 'she was sitting (i.e. 'seated') on the couch', *los jóvenes sentados en posición de flor loto* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'the young folk sitting in the lotus position', *estoy levantado, no arrodillado* 'I'm standing, not kneeling', *estaba apoyado contra la pared* 'he/I was leaning against the wall', *el gato estaba escondido debajo de la mesa* 'the cat was hiding under the table', *la abuela está acostada porque le duele la cabeza* 'grandma is lying down because she's got a headache', *estábamos agachados* 'we were crouching'.

Use of the gerund in such sentences creates a wholly different meaning: *la abuela se está acostando* means 'grandma is going to bed', i.e. is preparing herself for bed. In other words, the participle describes the position or posture someone or something is in, and the gerund describes an action in progress.

23.5 Participle clauses

Participle clauses (see Glossary) are common. They often have exact English counterparts, but there are slight differences between the two languages (see also 35.3.4 for sentences like *aceptó irritada* 'she accepted irritably'):

Me fui, convencido de que él no sabía nada	I left, convinced he knew nothing
José González, nacido el 23 de marzo su padre, muerto en 1956 . . .	José González, born on 23 March his father, who died in 1956 . . .
. . . preguntado qué le había gustado de ella, contesta con un gruñido (GGM, Col.)	. . . asked what he had liked about her, he replies with a grunt

Spanish allows certain participle clauses, more often in written language, that have no exact equivalents in English:

. . . refugiados y migrantes llegados a Europa desde el año pasado (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	. . . refugees and immigrants having arrived in Europe since last year
Concluidas las primeras investigaciones, la policía abandonó el lugar de autos	The initial investigations having been concluded, the police left the crime scene
. . . por fin, transcurridos siete años desde la publicación de su primera novela . . .	. . . at last, seven years having passed since the publication of his/her first novel . . .
Terminada la conferencia nos fuimos	When the lecture was over, we left
Después de vendida la casa, nos arrepentimos (from Seco, 1998, 334)	Once the house was sold, we regretted it
Arrasado el jardín, profanados los cálices y las aras, entraron a caballo los hunos en la biblioteca monástica (JLB, Arg. Very literary)	Having demolished the garden and profaned chalices and altars, the Huns rode into the monastery library

(1) *Llegar* seems to be the only unmodified verb of motion that allows this construction. One cannot say **entrada en el agua se puso a nadar* 'having entered 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'. But a few other verbs allow it if they are modified by an adverb: *recién bajados del tren* 'having just got out of the train', *ya entrado el día . . .* 'once the day had begun', *bien entrada la noche . . .* 'well after nightfall . . .'.

23.6 Participles ending in *-ante, -iente* or *-ente*

These are adjectival present participles. They may be formed from many verbs but by no means from all and they function like the English adjectival forms ending in -ing: 'Sleeping Beauty' = *La Bella Durmiente*. New coinages appear constantly, many of them inspired by English adjectives ending in -ing. They are formed as follows:

- *-ar* conjugation: replace the *-ar* of the infinitive by *-ante*: *alarmar* > *alarmante* 'alarming' *inquietar* > *inquietante* 'worrying';
- *-er* and *-ir* conjugations: replace the *-er* or *–ir* of the infinitive by *-iente* or by *-ente*, the choice being unpredictable.

Examples:

alucinar: *alucinante* astounding/amazing
concernir: *concerniente* concerning
conducir: *conducente* leading to
convenir conveniente suitable
crecer: *creciente* growing
deprimir: *deprimente* depressing
entrar: *entrante* incoming
existir: *existente* existing
fluir: *fluyente* flowing
ocurrir: *ocurrente* witty
pertenecer: *perteneciente* belonging to
proceder: *procedente* proceeding
producir: *producente* producing (also *contraproducente* counter-productive)
provenir: *proveniente de* coming from
restar: *restante*: remaining
salir: *saliente* outgoing
sorprender: *sorprendente* surprising
tender: *tendente* (*a*) tending (to)
vincular: *vinculante* binding

There are a few slightly irregular forms:

convencer: *convincente* convincing
dormir: *durmiente* sleeping
herir: *hiriente* wounding
reír: *riente* laughing
seguir: *siguiente* following
sonreír: *sonriente* smiling

These participle forms should be learned separately from the dictionary, especially in view of the remark in note 2. They are quite often used, especially in the media:

una situación cambiante/estresante — a changing/stressful situation
el ministro saliente/entrante — the outgoing/incoming minister
condiciones vinculantes — binding conditions
resultados sobresalientes — outstanding results
el millón y medio restante — the remaining 1.5 million
157.000 personas, pertenecientes a diferentes clases sociales y procedentes de lugares muy distintos de nacimiento . . . (*El País*, Sp.) — 157,000 people, belonging to various social classes and originating from widely different places of birth
El gran impacto que tuvieron en un escenario internacional resulta desconcertante, alentador y excitante (*La Jornada*, Mex.) — The great impact they had on an international stage is disconcerting, encouraging and exciting

(1) Important: the gerund in *-ando* or *-iendo* could not be used instead of the *-nte* form in any of these examples. See 24.3 for discussion.

(2) Important: one cannot predict which verbs have this kind of participle and foreign learners often invent non-existent words like **moviente* for 'moving': *piezas movibles* = 'moving parts', *espectáculo conmovedor* = 'moving spectacle'. Note also *mesa plegable* 'folding table', *agua potable* 'drinking water', *confiado/crédulo* = 'trusting', *planta trepadora* = 'climbing plant', *resultados satisfactorios* 'satisfying results', *hechos reveladores* 'revealing facts', *un libro aburrido* 'a boring book', *es cansado* 'it's/he's tiring', and many others.

(3) Many forms in *-nte* are not strictly speaking participles but ordinary adjectives, e.g. *brillante* 'shining', *corriente* 'current'/'ordinary', *aparente* 'apparent', *reciente* 'recent', etc.

(4) These participles do not normally have a separate feminine form: *la presidenta saliente* 'the outgoing (female) president'. There are a few colloquial or popular exceptions, e.g. *dominanta* 'bossy' (a woman, more usually *dominante*), *currante-curranta* familiar European Spanish for 'hard-working'; *currante* can also be used for females. *Atorrante-atorranta* (Lat. Am.) 'slacker'/'layabout' is also heard. However, a few nouns in *-nte* make their feminine with *-nta*. See 1.2.5.

24 The gerund

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- Forms of the gerund (Section 24.2)
- Translating 'a box containing books', 'a girl speaking French' (Section 24.3)
- Main uses of the gerund (Section 24.4)
- 'I imagined her dancing', 'I heard them talking', etc. (Sections 24.6–7)
- Gerund with *andar*, *ir*, *llevar*, *quedarse*, *salir*, *venir*, *acabar*, *terminar* (Section 24.8)
- Translating the English –ing form (Section 24.9)

The gerund is the verb form that ends in *-ando* or -(*i*)*endo*: *andando*, *respondiendo*, *diciendo*, *riñendo*, etc.

For the use of the gerund to form the continuous aspect of verbs, e.g. *estoy hablando* 'I'm talking', *estaba escribiendo* '(s)he was writing', etc. See Chapter 19.

24.1 General

The gerund is invariable in form but pronouns are sometimes attached to it. This may be obligatory, as in *contestó riéndose* '(s)he replied (by) laughing', or optional as in *estaban esperándolos* or *los estaban esperando* 'they were waiting for them'. Object pronouns never appear directly before a gerund: ***los esperando* is not possible for *esperándolos* 'waiting for them'. See 14.3.6 for details on the use and position of pronouns with gerunds.

The Spanish gerund is quite unlike the English -ing form ('walking', 'replying', 'saying', etc.), which can function as a gerund, a present participle, a noun or an adjective. It is also unlike the French form ending in *-ant*, which covers the functions of both the Spanish gerund and the adjectival form ending in *-ante*, -(*i*)*ente* discussed at 23.6.

The Spanish gerund is a kind of adverb and it therefore should theoretically not modify nouns. See 24.3 for discussion.

The *NGLE* 27.7q notes the increasing use of the gerund on both continents, especially in book and film titles, e.g. *Bailando con lobos* 'Dances with Wolves', *Cantando bajo la lluvia* 'Singin' in the Rain'. See 19.1.1 for more on this subject.

Important: except in one archaic construction described at 24.5, the Spanish gerund is never preceded by a preposition, so **estoy harto de diciéndolo* is not Spanish for *estoy harto de decirlo* 'I'm tired of saying it'. Nor can the gerund ever be used as a noun: **fumando daña los pulmones* is absolutely wrong for (*el*) *fumar daña los pulmones* 'smoking damages the lungs'.

24.2 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*, *dar* 'to give' *dando*.

(**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.*

Exceptions – not all of them truly 'irregular':

decir and its compounds: *di**c**iendo*
dormir, *morir*: *d**u**rmiendo*, *m**u**riendo*
ir: ***y**endo* (regular, despite appearances)
oír and its compounds: *o**y**endo* (regular)
verbs like *pedir, elegir*: *p**i**diendo*, *el**i**giendo*, *r**iñ**endo*, *h**i**riendo*, ***i**rguiéndose*
poder: *p**u**diendo*
verbs like *reír*: *r**i**endo*, *sonr**i**endo*
verbs like *sentir*: *s**i**ntiendo*, *h**i**rviendo*, *m**i**ntiendo*
venir and its compounds: *v**i**niendo*

(1) Verbs whose infinitive ends in *-uir*, *-eer*, *-aer* or *-oer* obey the spelling rule shown at 16.11.13, e.g. *construir – construyendo*, *huir – huyendo*, *poseer – poseyendo*, *creer – creyendo*, *traer – trayendo*, *caer – cayendo*, *roer – royendo*, etc.

(2) Verbs whose infinitive ends in *-ñer*, *-ñir* or *-llir* obey the spelling rule shown at 16.4.10, e.g. *tañer – tañendo*, *ceñir – ciñendo* (conjugated like *pedir*), *bullir – bullendo*, etc.

24.3 'A box containing books' 'a girl speaking French', etc.

English and French can avoid relative clauses by using the -ing or the *-ant* form of the verb:

We need a girl who speaks French
He had a box that contained several books
Vous cherchez un médecin qui parle votre langue? ('Are you looking for a doctor who speaks your language?')

We need a girl speak**ing** French
He had a box contain**ing** several books
*Vous cherchez un médecin parl**ant** votre langue?*

Since the Spanish gerund can, strictly speaking, modify only verbs and not nouns, such sentences must usually be translated by a relative clause:

Necesitamos una chica que hable francés (not **hablando francés*)
We need a girl who speaks French

Tenían una caja que contenía varios libros (not **conteniendo varios libros*)
They had a box containing several books

¿Busca usted un médico que hable su lengua?
Are you looking for a doctor who speaks your language?

In careful Spanish, the gerund is usually possible only when there is a verb in the main clause to which it can refer, e.g. *me escribió pidiéndome que fuera/fuese a verla* '(s)he wrote a letter asking me to go and see her'. But this rule is broken:

(**a**) In captions to pictures:

Dos cazas siendo preparados para el despegue
Two fighter aircraft being readied for take-off

El Avante publicó mi foto quitándome los aretes (AM, Mex., dialogue. *Aretes* = *los pendientes* in Spain)
Avante published a photo of me taking off my earrings

(**b**) After nouns that are the objects of verbs meaning 'hear', 'imagine', 'see', 'find', usually to show that the action is actually in progress. See 24.6–7 for more details;

(**c**) in the exceptional cases of the adjectives *ardiendo* 'burning' and *hirviendo* 'boiling'. See 5.3 for discussion;

(**d**) with the preposition *con*: *volvió en sí con el brazo sangrando* '(s)he came round with his/her arm bleeding', *salimos del bar con la cabeza dando vueltas* 'we left the bar with our heads spinning';

(**e**) in official and administrative documents: *una ley decretando . . .* (= *una ley por la que se decreta* 'a law decreeing . . .'. This construction, sometimes called the *gerundio curialense* or 'lawyers' gerund', is entrenched in certain documents, e.g. the *Boletín Oficial del Estado* (where Spanish laws are published), but Seco (1998, 228) condemns it, as does the *NGLE* 27.7a and the stylebook of *El País*;

(**f**) occasionally by writers whose style is presumably above reproach, as in *el propósito de Probo, el hombre solo afrontando a la multitud, no se pudo realizar* (Seco, 1998, xvii) 'it was not possible to realize the goal of Probus, the man alone confronting the multitude', despite his condemnation of this very construction (ibid., p. 228);

(**g**) constantly in spontaneous speech and informal writing:

. . . luego ya en mi habitación, recién limpia y oliendo a ambientador de flores (CMG, Sp.)	. . . then back in my room, (which was) recently cleaned and smelling of flower-scented air-freshener
Tenía mi edad y un hijo viviendo con su mamá (AM, Mex., dialogue)	She was my age and had a son living with his mother
el tenue ruido de un cuerpo moviéndose con sigilo (LS, Ch.)	the faint sound of a body moving stealthily
. . . con la luna ahí colgando para nosotros (ABE, Pe.)	. . . with the moon hanging there for us
Se aseguraron mil 803 paquetes conteniendo un vegetal verde y seco al parecer mariguana (*La Jornada*, Mex. *Marihuana* in other countries)	1803 packages containing a green, dry vegetable substance, apparently marihuana, were recovered
Hombres trabajando a 400m (Mexican road sign)	Men working at 400 metres

(1) Foreign learners should probably imitate only the possibilities listed at (**a**), (**b**), (**c**) and (**d**). However, the grammarians' complaints about (**e**), (**f**) and (**g**) seem excessive since these constructions are clearly sometimes acceptable to careful native speakers.

(2) The *NGLE* 27.7l notes that misuse of *conteniendo* in phrases like *una caja conteniendo libros* is spreading, but does not approve of it.

(3) The participle form ending in *-nte* may sometimes be used like the English -ing form: *una tumba más amplia perteneciente a Nefertiti* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'a larger tomb belonging to Nefertiti'. This construction, typical of newspapers, is possible only with a limited number of verbs. It is discussed at 23.6.

(4) For the use of the gerund after *hay* see 24.6d.

(5) French allows the *-ant* form to refer to a subject different from that of the main clause: *la pluie tombant à verse, le voyageur s'arrêta sous un hangar.* The gerund cannot be used here: ***ya que*** *llovía a cántaros, el viajero se detuvo bajo un granero*, 'since it was pouring with rain, the traveller stopped under a barn' (not **lloviendo a cántaros . . .*).

24.4 Main uses of the gerund to modify the main verb in the sentence

24.4.1 Gerund used to indicate simultaneous actions

The gerund is used to indicate an action happening at the same time – or almost the same time – as the action of the main verb:

Se fue gritando	(S)he went off shouting
Nos recibió bañándose	She received us while having a bath
Me bajé del caballo queriendo un zumo de naranja (AM, Mex.)	I got down from my horse as I wanted (lit. 'wanting') an orange juice
Un día, caminando por la playa, tuvo una idea	One day, while walking along the beach, (s)he had an idea
—Aquí tiene mi tarjeta, dijo Félix entregándosela al chofer (CF, Mex., in Spain *chofer* = *chófer*)	'Here's my card,' Felix said, handing it to the driver'

(1) Important: the actions of the gerund and of the main verb should be simultaneous or almost simultaneous. ?*El ladrón huyó volviendo horas más tarde* 'the thief fled, returning hours later' should be *el ladrón huyó y volvió horas más tarde*. ?*Abriendo la puerta, entró en la casa* (for *abrió la puerta y entró en la casa*) is less acceptable in Spanish than 'opening the door, (s)he entered the house': the Academy's *NGLE* 27.4g considers it is incorrect. However – and rather arbitrarily – *salió de casa dando un portazo* '(s)he left the house slamming the door' is acceptable since it is considered to be almost simultaneous.

(2) Important: the Spanish gerund should also not be used to describe an action that is the result of a previous action: one says *el edificio se hundió y mató a varias personas* not ? . . . *se hundió matando a varias personas* 'the building collapsed killing several people', although this rule is constantly broken in the media.

(3) 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 Rafael se había casado* 'while I was in Paris, I found out that Rafael had got married', *lo/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', *y menos todavía estando los dos a solas* (ES, Mex.) 'and even less when the two of them were/are on their own'.

Note the position of a personal pronoun with the gerund: *estoy dispuesto a hablar de ello, pero no estando ustedes presentes* 'I'm prepared to talk about it, but not with you (plural) present'.

24.4.2 Gerund used to indicate method

The gerund may indicate the method by which an action is performed. English usually requires the preposition 'by':

Hicieron su fortuna comprando acciones a tiempo	They made their fortune (by) buying shares at the right time
Hacéis divinamente no teniendo niños (AG, Sp., dialogue)	You're doing just the absolutely right thing by not having children
Estás obligado a escribir otra novela. No publicando esta/ésta te he hecho un favor (MVM, Sp., dialogue)	You're obliged to write another novel. I've done you a favour by not publishing this one
. . . como si supiera la verdad y no quisiera ofenderlo diciéndosela (CF, Mex.)	. . . as if he knew the truth and didn't want to offend him by telling it to him

(1) This construction often expresses a condition: *apretándolo/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'.

(2) The *NGLE* 27.1i notes that the gerund can alternate with the infinitive after *manera*, *forma*, *modo* and similar words: it quotes *la única manera de abrirlo es cambiando/cambiar este taladro por otro* 'the only way of opening it is by swapping this drill for another'.

24.4.3 Gerund used to express purpose (= *para* + infinitive)

This construction occurs with verbs of communication:

Me escribió diciéndome/para decirme que fuera/fuese a verle	(S)he wrote telling me to come and see him
Nos llamó pidiendo/para pedir ayuda	(S)he rang us asking/to ask for help
Recibí una llamada . . . diciéndome que estaba en la caseta de cobro de la autopista (AH, Mex.)	I got a call telling me he was in the toll booth on the motorway/turnpike

24.4.4 Gerund used 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
Siendo gobernador del Estado de México, fue uno de los dos principales clientes del Centro Fox (AH, Mex.)	Since/While he was governor of the state of Mexico he was one of the main clients of the Fox Centre
Tratándose de usted, no faltaba más	Since it's you, there's no need to mention it
No queriendo molestar me fui	Not wanting to be a nuisance, I left
Un día, no teniendo nada que hacer, fue a verla	One day, not having anything to do, (s)he went to see her

24.4.5 Gerund used to express concession (= *aunque* + finite verb)

The Spanish gerund occasionally signifies 'although', often in combination with *aun* 'even':

Siendo inteligente como es, a veces parece tonto	Although intelligent, he sometimes seems stupid
Llegando tarde y todo, nos ayudó mucho	Although (s)he arrived late, (s)he helped us a lot
Es probable que este servicio no se ofrezca en su provincia o que, aun existiendo, no se haya anunciado (*Yellow Pages*, Sp.)	It is probable that this service is not available in your province or, even if it exists ('even existing') it has not been advertised
. . . incluidos aquellos que, siendo soldados, se entreguen sin combatir a nuestras fuerzas (JV, Mex.)	. . . including those who, even though they are enemy soldiers, surrender to our forces without fighting

24.4.6 Gerund preceded by *como* as an equivalent of *como si*

Me miró como calculando mi edad (SP, Sp., = *como si estuviera calculando*)	She looked at me as though calculating my age
Si un perro tiene un problema que no puede resolver, voltea a ver al humano como pidiendo cooperación o ayuda (*Excélsior*, Mex. *Voltear* = *volverse* in Spain)	If a dog has a problem it can't solve it turns to look at the human as if asking for cooperation or help

24.5 *En* + gerund

In older language and in some dialects, especially in Latin America, 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 is extinct in standard modern Spanish. *Al* + infinitive is discussed at 22.3.3.

The use of *en* + the gerund to indicate conditions, as in *en sabiendo que están bien y contentos, ya tengo bastante* 'as long as I know they're well and happy, that's enough for me' is mentioned in *GDLE* 10.8.5, but it also seems to be virtually extinct in modern Spanish.

24.6 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 24.7 for details.

(**b**) With verbs like *coger*, *pillar* 'to catch', *arrestar* 'to arrest', *dejar* 'to leave', *descubrir* 'to discover', *encontrar/hallar* 'to find', *sorprender* 'to surprise', *pescar* 'to catch by surprise':

Lo/Le cogí/pillé robando	I caught him stealing
Me sorprendí repitiendo entre dientes. . . (CMG, Sp.)	I caught myself repeating between my teeth . . . (i.e. 'muttering')
Dejamos a Andrés durmiendo (AM, Mex., dialogue)	We left Andrés sleeping

(**c**) With verbs of representation like 'paint', 'draw', 'photograph', 'show', 'describe', 'imagine', 'represent', etc.:

La pinté tocando el clavicémbalo	I painted her playing the harpsichord
Esta fotografía muestra al rey bajando del avión	This photo shows the King getting out of the plane
Los imaginaba caminando por la playa cargados de armas (EM, Mex.)	He pictured them walking along the beach loaded with guns

Captions under photos or other pictures fall into this category. See 24.3a above.

(d) With *haber*: *había más de cien personas haciendo cola* 'there were more than a hundred people queuing/standing in line', *no hay nadie esperando* 'there's no one waiting'. Note that, unlike English, this construction does not allow the definite article. One can say *mira, hay un niño jugando* 'look, there's a child playing', but not **mira, hay el niño jugando* 'look, there's the child, playing': *mira, ahí está el niño jugando*.

24.7 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' and *sentir* 'to feel'/'to hear', the gerund may be used to qualify the object of the main verb, as in *abrimos el periódico y vemos a niños muriéndose de hambre* (*El País*, Sp.) 'we open newspapers and see children dying of hunger'. Usually the infinitive is also possible in this construction, the difference being that the infinitive indicates a completed action and the gerund an action that is or was still in progress. Compare *la vi fumando un cigarrillo* 'I saw her (while she was) smoking a cigarette' and *la vi fumar un cigarrillo* 'I saw her smoke a cigarette' (see 22.2.4 for the infinitive). There is usually a colloquial alternative to the gerund using *que* + a finite verb: *la vi que fumaba un cigarrillo* 'I saw that she was smoking a cigarette'. Further examples:

No se me olvida mi hijo bailando con ella	I can't forget my son dancing with her
Me gustaba sentir la lluvia azotando los avellanos de la huerta (CMG, Sp.)	I liked to hear the rain lashing the hazelnut trees in the garden
Cuando Félix divisó al doctor leyendo una revista política . . . (CF, Mex.)	When Felix caught sight of the doctor reading a political magazine . . .
Por eso los recuerdo siempre bebiendo (ABE, Pe., dialogue)	That's why I remember them always drinking

(1) With *ir* and *venir* the gerund is not usual: 'I saw him coming towards me' is *lo/le vi venir hacia mí* or *lo/le vi que venía hacia mí* but not **lo/le vi viniendo hacia mí*.

(2) *Oír* 'hear' may take a gerund, as in *desde allí oíamos al niño jugando en su cuarto* 'from there we could hear the child playing in his/her room', but it appears more often with either the infinitive or with *que* and a finite verb: *oí entrar a alguien/oí que alguien entraba* 'I heard someone come in'; see 22.2.4 for examples. The infinitive is safest for foreigners, since a gerund could be taken to refer to the subject of the main verb, e.g. ?*la vi entrando* could mean 'I saw her while I was entering'.

However, the gerund is common when its subject is non-living: *cuando el sargento oye la corneta tocando la retirada* (MVLl, Pe.) 'when the sergeant hears the trumpet sounding the retreat', *. . . la voz del propio comandante saludando por la megafonía* (MT, Sp.) '. . . the voice of the commandant himself greeting us over the public-address system'.

(3) Nouns that mean the same thing as this sort of verb can also be followed by a gerund, e.g. *un ruido de lluvia cayendo sobre hojas secas* 'a sound of rain falling on dry leaves', *el eco de una voz gritando* 'the echo of a voice shouting', *una descripción de una jirafa sentándose* 'a description of a giraffe sitting down'.

24.8 Other uses of the gerund

24.8.1 Gerund with *andar*

This translates the English 'to go around doing something' often with the same implication of pointless activity, or it suggests frequent activity, e.g. 'keeps on doing . . .'. *Ir* can often replace *andar* in this construction, but *andar* tends to imply intermittent activity:

Siempre anda/va buscando camorra	(S)he always goes round looking for trouble
Era profesor de geografía, y siempre anduvo solicitando traslados (CMG, Sp.)	He was a geography teacher, and was always applying for transfers (to other schools)
Anduve maldiciendo todo el jueves (AM, Mex., dialogue)	All day Thursday I went around swearing
Anda escribiendo una novela (from *NGLE* 28.14a)	(S)he's writing a novel on and off

(1) Spoken, but not formal Mexican, often uses *andar* for *estar* to form the continuous: *¿andas trabajando?* (for *¿estás trabajando?*) 'are you working?', *a lo mejor se andaba despidiendo* (EM, Mex., dialogue) 'maybe he was saying goodbye' (*despedirse* 'to say goodbye'), see 19.5.

(2) The idea of repetitive activity is sometimes expressed colloquially by *vivir* + gerund in colloquial Latin American Spanish: *mi esposa me vive repitiendo que no me ama* (forum, Mex.) 'my wife keeps on telling me she doesn't love me', *me vivía diciendo 'te amo' y ahora no la voy a escuchar nunca más* (interview, *Diario La Provincia*, Arg. Sp. *vivía diciendo*) 'she kept telling me "I love you" and now I'm not going to listen to her ever again'.

24.8.2 Gerund with *ir*

(**a**) Expresses slow, painstaking or gradual action:

Nos vamos haciendo más sabios	We're (gradually) getting wiser
Ella se fue doblando hasta caer al suelo	She gradually doubled up until she fell to the ground
Así ha ido perdiendo todos los clientes, por estar pensando en otra cosa (MP, Arg.)	That's how he's been losing all his clients, through thinking about other things
. . . los libros que fui leyendo después (SG, Mex.)	. . . the books I went on to read later
Gano lo necesario para ir tirando	I earn enough to get by

(1) 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* (Sp. *estoy acabando ya/estoy a punto de acabar*) 'wait a moment, I'm just finishing', *voy llegando ahorita* (Sp. *acabo de llegar*) 'I've only just arrived'. See also 24.8.6 note 1 for a similar construction with *venir*. The *NGLE* 28.13f notes that in Mexico and Central America this construction can also be a near equivalent of *casi/por poco*: *me iba dejando el avión = casi me deja el avión* 'the plane nearly left me behind'. This is not heard in Spain.

(**b**) To express the idea of 'getting on with' something:

Ya es hora de ir terminando esto	It's time we got on with finishing this
Ya puedes ir preparando todo para cuando lleguen	You can start getting things ready for when they arrive
Ve escribiendo todo lo que te dicte	Write down everything as I dictate it to you

24.8.3 Gerund with *llevar*

This provides a neat translation of 'for' a specific time period as in *llevo dos meses pintando esta casa* 'I've been painting this house for two months'. In Latin America *llevar* in this construction may be optionally replaced by *tener*. For details see 36.3.1.

24.8.4 Gerund with *quedarse*

This translates the idea of 'to continue to do something':

Me quedé ayudándolos un rato	I stayed on for a while to help them
Me quedé meditándolo durante algunos momentos (JV, Mex., dialogue)	I spent a few minutes thinking it over
Yo me le quedé mirando . . . (JH, Mex., dialogue)	I remained/went on looking at him

24.8.5 Gerund with *seguir* and *continuar*

Seguir and *continuar* with the gerund translate 'to go on . . . -ing', 'to continue to . . .', as in *Ruso 'revive' en la morgue y corre a continuar bebiendo vodka* (*Excélsior*, Mex.) 'Russian "comes back to life" in morgue and runs off to carry on drinking vodka'. See 36.8 for further remarks.

24.8.6 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 los programas que se vienen ejecutando en el campo de la cardiología infantil (*Granma*, Cu.)	(S)he's been saying the same thing for years the program(me)s that have been carried out (up to now) in the field of child cardiology
El plan de invasión venía siendo desarrollado desde 1967	The invasion plan had been in preparation since 1967
Hay muchísimo interés en lo que en este momento viene siendo algo que sin duda tiene alta rentabilidad (*El Universal*, Mex.)	There is a great deal of interest in what at this moment is becoming something that is without doubt highly profitable

(1) The following construction is heard in Mexico and Central America: *¿Qué, no lo viste? Ah, claro: tú vienes llegando apenas* (Sp. *apenas acabas de llegar*) 'What? Didn't you see it? Oh, of course, you've only just arrived' (from J.M. Lope Blanch, 1991, 17), *venía llegando, escuché y entré corriendo para ver a mi hija que estaba dormida* (interview, *El Universal*, Mex.) 'I'd just arrived, I listened and ran in to see my daughter who was asleep'.

(2) *Venir siendo* has the colloquial meaning 'it happened that', as in *venía siendo amiga del obispo* 'she happened to be a friend of the bishop'. This is also used in Spain.

24.8.7 Gerund with *acabar, terminar*

These verbs with the gerund mean 'end by':

Siempre acaba riéndose	(S)he always ends by laughing
A este paso lo vas a acabar destruyendo (ES, Mex., dialogue)	At this rate you'll eventually destroy it
Acabarás haciendo lo que ella diga	You'll end by/up doing what she says
. . . porque con el tiempo terminaríamos no viéndonos nunca (ABE, Pe., dialogue)	. . . because with time we were to end by not seeing one another at all

(1) *Acabar por* + infinitive is an equivalent and is more common in negative statements: *acabarás por no salir nunca de casa* 'you'll end by/up never going out of the house'.

24.9 Translating the English -ing form

The following examples consist mainly of cases where the English -ing form cannot be translated by the Spanish gerund.

24.9.1 When the -ing form is the subject of a verb

This is normally translated by an infinitive or by a suitable noun:

Eating too much butter is bad for the heart	*Comer demasiada mantequilla es malo para el corazón*
No smoking	*Prohibido fumar*
Skiing is expensive	*Esquiar/El esquí cuesta mucho*
Salmon fishing is an art	*La pesca del salmón es un arte*

24.9.2 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:

(S)he dreads having to start	*Teme tener que empezar*
I like swimming	*Me gusta nadar/Me gusta la natación*
(S)he gave up gambling	*Dejó de jugar/Dejó el juego*
Try calling him	*Intenta llamarlo/le*
There's nothing I like better than working in the garden	*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 when required by the rules given in Chapter 20:

I can't stand Pedro singing	*No aguanto que Pedro cante*
I didn't mind him/her living here	*No me importaba que viviera/viviese aquí*
I recommended promoting her	*Recomendé su ascenso/que la ascendiesen/ascendieran*
I approve of your getting up early	*Me parece bien que te levantes temprano*

Some verbs allow the gerund. See 24.6–7.

24.9.3 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	*Tienes que cortarte el pelo*
This needs attending to	*Hace falta cuidar esto/Hay que atender a esto*
You're not worth listening to	*No vale la pena escucharte*
It wants/needs polishing	*Hace falta/Hay que sacarle brillo*

24.9.4 The -ing form preceded by prepositions

Unless the preposition is 'by' (see 24.4.2) an infinitive or clause must be used:

I'm looking forward to seeing you	*Tengo ganas de verte*
I prefer swimming to running	*Prefiero nadar a correr*
He was punished for being late	*Lo/Le castigaron por llegar tarde*
This is a good opportunity for showing what you mean	*Esta/Ésta es una buena oportunidad para demostrar lo que quieres decir*
You get nothing in life without working	*No se consigue nada en esta vida sin trabajo/sin trabajar*
He was furious at being mistaken for his/her brother	*Le enfurecía que lo/le confundieran/confundiesen con su hermano*

24.9.5 The -ing form before nouns

(**a**) If the -ing form is itself a noun, translation is usually by an infinitive or a noun:

driving licence/US driving permit	*el carnet/el permiso de conducir*
dancing shoes	*los zapatos de baile*
fishing rod	*la caña de pescar*

(**b**) If the -ing form is a participle (adjective) then a relative clause may be used, unless a participle in *-ante* or -(*i*)*ente* exists (see 23.6):

the chiming bells	*las campanas que tañen/tañían* (**tañente* does not exist)
a worrying problem	*un problema inquietante*
a flying object	*un objeto volante/volador*
a convincing reply	*una respuesta convincente*

But often an idiomatic solution must be sought in either case:

boiling point	*el punto de ebullición*
changing room	*el vestuario*
conditioning cream	*la crema suavizante*
dining room	*el comedor*
drinking water	*el agua potable*
flying planes	*aviones en vuelo*
flying saucer	*el platillo volante*
riding boots	*las botas de montar*
sleeping bag	*el saco de dormir*
steering wheel	*el volante*
turning point	*el punto decisivo/la vuelta de la marea*
walking boots	*las botas de senderismo*

For the exceptional use of *hirviendo* 'boiling' and *ardiendo* 'burning' as adjectives, see 5.3.

25 Auxiliary verbs

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- *Poder* and *saber* (Section 25.2)
- *Deber*, *deber de* and *tener que* (Section 25.3)
- *Ha debido/podido hacerlo* or *lo ha debido/podido hacer*? (Section 25.3.5)
- *Haber*, *haber de*, *haber que* (Section 25.4)
- *Querer* (Section 25.5)
- *Soler* and *acostumbrar* (Section 25.6)
- Translating 'would', 'shall', 'will' 'ought to', and 'got to' (Section 25.7)

25.1 General

Auxiliary verbs are verbs like *poder*, *saber*, *deber*, *haber que*, *tener que*, *soler* or 'would', 'may', 'might', 'can', 'could', 'should', 'ought to', 'to have to', that express various shades of meaning, usually when combined with an infinitive, as in *podría llover* 'it may/might rain', *deberían hacerlo* 'they ought to do it', *tengo que trabajar* 'I've got to work'.

25.2 *Poder* and *saber* 'to be able to'/'to know how to'

25.2.1 *Poder* and *saber* contrasted

Both verbs often translate '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'. Sometimes the meanings overlap:

¿Sabes nadar?	Can you swim? (do you know how to?)
¿Puedes nadar hoy?	Can you swim today? (are you able to/are you allowed to?)
Nunca podía salir con sus amigas	She could never/was never allowed to go out with her girlfriends
Soy libre. Puedo hacer lo que quiero	I'm free. I can do whatever I want
La importancia de saber comer es mucha (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	Knowing how to eat is highly important
Julia se sabe ganar/sabe ganarse las simpatías de todo el mundo	Julia knows how to win everyone's affection
Lo único que sabía hacer era trabajar honradamente (*CORPES*, CR)	The only thing he could do was honest work
Nunca había podido descifrarlo/nunca podrá descifrarlo	(S)he had never been able to decipher it/(S)he'll never be able to decipher it

(1) *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*.

(2) Idioms with *poder*: *no puedo más*, *estoy harto* 'I can't go on, I'm fed up', *al menos en ese terreno la vida no ha podido conmigo* (CMG, Sp.) 'in that area at least, life hasn't got the better of me', *con esa estatura no hay quien pueda con él* (MS, Mex., dialogue) 'with height like that (i.e. with him being that tall . . .) no one can get the better of him'.

(4) *Saber* means to know a fact or skill: *sé la respuesta* 'I know the answer', *sabías dónde estaban* 'you knew where they were', *sé ruso* 'I know Russian', *sé cocinar* 'I know how to cook'. *Conocer* means 'to be acquainted with', e.g. *conozco a tu primo* 'I know your cousin', *yo no conocía Buenos Aires* 'I didn't know Buenos Aires'; its other meanings should be sought in a good dictionary.

25.2.2 Preterite and imperfect of *poder* and *saber*

The preterite of *poder* often means 'to manage to' (but see note 2), and the preterite of *saber* usually means 'to find out' as opposed to 'know', although it can mean 'was able to'. The imperfect of *poder* means 'was able to' but does not give us further information. The imperfect of *saber* means 'knew':

No pudo escaparse	(S)he couldn't escape (. . . didn't manage to)
No podía escaparse	(S)he couldn't escape (no information about whether (s)he eventually did)
No me pudo ver porque yo estaba ocupada	(S)he didn't get to see me because I was busy
No podía verme porque estaba siempre ocupada	(S)he couldn't see me because she/I was always busy
Yo ya sabía la verdad	I already knew the truth
Cuando supe la noticia de tu éxito . . .	When I heard the news of your success . . .
Esa noche también traía mis copas y nunca supe bien qué pasó (ES, Mex., dialogue. Sp. . . . *llevaba unas copas encima y. . .*)	I was pretty drunk as well that night and I never really found out what happened
Me miró con una expresión sobria y grave que no supe descifrar (JM, Sp.)	He looked at me with a sober, serious expression that I was unable to decipher

(1) In those areas where the perfect of recency is used, e.g. Spain, Bolivia, Peru, *haber sabido* can also mean 'to realize', 'to find out': *no he sabido que era campeón hasta la última vuelta* (racing driver in *El Periódico*, Sp.) 'I didn't realize I was the champion until the last lap'.

(2) Strangely, the affirmative preterite form of *poder* can also mean the opposite of 'manage to', i.e. 'could have done but didn't'. See 25.2.3c.

(3) '"Can you see the stars?"', '"I can see them"', etc., are usually expressed —*¿ves las estrellas?* —*Las veo*. *No lo/le puedo ver* may mean 'I can't stand him' as well as 'can't see . . .'.

25.2.3 *Poder* to express possibility and suggestions

Poder is usually translated by 'could' or 'may'. Either the imperfect or the conditional can be used:

(**a**) Possibility/suggestions

Lo que podíamos/podríamos hacer es tirar este tabique	What we could do is to knock down this partition wall
Creo que esta/ésta podría ser una salida digna para todos (JV, Mex., dialogue)	I think this could be a dignified way out [of the problem] for everyone
Puede/Podría/Podía haberle ocurrido algo	Something could have happened to him/her

Pudiera could also be used for *podría*, but it is less usual in spoken language.

(**b**) Polite requests

The conditional is more usual than the imperfect in polite requests, but both are heard:

¿Podría/Podía usted abrir la ventana?	Could you open the window?
—¿Podríamos hablar con ella? —le preguntéé (JV, Mex., dialogue)	'Could we talk to her?' I asked him
¿Podrías/Podías decirle al jefe que estoy enfermo?	Could you tell the boss I'm ill/sick?

(**c**) The affirmative preterite indicative form may often express something that could have happened but didn't:

El día que pudo haber estallado la Tercera Guerra Mundial	The day World War III could have broken out
. . . pensando en lo que pudo haber sido y no fue (JM, Sp.)	. . . thinking of what might have been and wasn't
El hombre que pudo ser Presidente (*Excélsior*, Mex.)	The man who could have been President

But it can, paradoxically, also mean 'could and *did*', as in *pudo abrir la puerta* '(s)he managed to open the door', *Félix lo saludó y solo/sólo pudo retener una impresión* (CF, Mex.) 'Félix greeted him and only managed to retain a (fleeting) impression'.

The negative preterite means 'couldn't and didn't': *no pudimos conseguirlo* 'we didn't manage to get it'.

(**d**) The imperfect indicative (not the conditional) can also be used to reproach somebody for something not done in the past. The preterite can also be used:

Me lo podías/pudiste haber dicho	You could have told me
Podías haber puesto algún adornito de Navidad (CRG, Sp., dialogue)	You could have put up some Christmas decorations

(2) *Puede ser*, *podría/pudiera ser*, *podría/pudiera haber sido* are equivalent to 'it could be', 'it could have been'; *pudiera* is less common in the spoken language: *aun en el caso de que nuestro viejo profesor se hubiera muerto, que bien pudiera ser . . .* (CMG, Sp.) 'even if our old teacher had died, which could well have happened'.

In answers, *puede ser* can be abbreviated to *puede*: *—¿Vas a pescar mañana? —Puede/puede que sí* '"Are you going fishing tomorrow?" "Perhaps/Maybe . . ."'.

(2) For the use of *poder que* with the subjunctive, see 20.3.5.

25.2.4 *Poder* used in speculations

As in English, *poder* can be used to speculate about something: *ha llamado alguien. ¿Quién puede/podrá haber sido/ha podido/habrá podido ser?* 'Somebody called. Who could it have been?', *podría ser/podría haber sido/puede haber sido tu tía* 'it could be/could have been your aunt'.

25.3 *Deber* and *deber de*

25.3.1 *Deber* to express obligation

Deber + infinitive translates 'must' in the sense of 'obliged to', 'ought to':

Su hijo debe trabajar más si quiere aprobar el examen (in Latin America *pasar un examen* is common and is heard in Spain)	Your/His/Her son must work harder if he wants to pass the examination
Hubo un verano en el que el marido debió ausentarse de más por razones profesionales (JM, Sp.)	There was a summer when her husband had to be away more often than usual for professional reasons
¿Quién debe manejar las finanzas hogareñas, el hombre o la mujer? (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	Who should manage the home finances the man or the woman?

(1) Important: *deber **de*** should not be used to express obligation. ?*Debes de hacerlo ahora* sounds bad for *debes hacerlo ahora* 'you've got to do it now'. This mistake is not uncommon in popular speech on both continents and even in writing, cf. *si desea hacer alguna rectificación en la libreta electoral, debe de acreditarlo con documentación* (Peruvian official document) 'if you wish to make any change in the Electoral Register, you must provide documentary support'. This use of *deber de* is common in colloquial speech everywhere. See the next section for the standard use of *deber de*.

(2) *Tener que* can be used instead to strengthen the obligation, i.e. *tienes que trabajar* 'you have to work', *tuvieron que intervenir* 'they had to intervene'. See 25.3.4.

(3) The degree of obligation is reduced by using the conditional or, less often, the *-ra* form of *deber*. Since the imperfect is often colloquially used as a conditional (see 17.5.4b), *deberías hacerlo*, *debías hacerlo* and *debieras hacerlo* can therefore all mean 'you ought to do it', although *debieras* is more literary.

25.3.2 *Deber (de)* to express probability or supposition

Deber de can only express probability or supposition, although *deber* alone is nowadays also constantly and increasingly used with this meaning:

Debiste (*de*) *llegar tarde*	You must have arrived late
Debe (*de*) *haber sido muy bella*	She must have been very beautiful
Deben (*de*) *ser las cinco*	It must be five o'clock
Se te ha roto el vestido por detrás, sí, sí, has debido de engancharte en un clavo (RC, Sp.)	Your dress has got torn at the back, yes, yes, you must have got caught on a nail
En verano debía de ser una bella alameda (LS, Ch.)	In summer it must have been a fine tree-lined avenue
Debieron de haber abandonado su base antes de que comenzara el ataque (AH, Mex.)	They must have left their base before the attack began

(1) As stated above, the modern tendency is to use *deber* both for obligation and supposition as in *debió ser vergüenza* (JMa, Sp.) 'it must have been shame', *tiene arañazos en el brazo izquierdo, que debió hacerse al caer* (MS, Mex., dialogue) 'he's got scratches on his left arm that he must have got when he fell'. This use of *deber* without *de* for suppositions is now so widespread that the *NGLE* 28.6k accepts it but prefers *deber de* for suppositions.

(2) Mexican Spanish constantly uses *haber de* to express suppositions. See 25.4.1b.

(3) Like 'got to' in English, *tener que* can also indicate a strong supposition. See 25.3.4.

25.3.3 Preterite, conditional and imperfect of *deber*

The preterite expresses something that should have been done; the negative something that should not have been done. The conditional and the imperfect express something that should be done.

Debió decírtelo antes	(S)he ought to/should have told you before
Debía/debería decírtelo antes	(S)he ought to/should tell you before
No debiste hacerlo	You shouldn't have done it
En ese momento debí desconfiarme, pero no lo hice (JI, Mex., dialogue. Sp. *debí desconfiar*)	At that moment I ought to/should have been suspicious, but I wasn't
Volvió al sitio del que nunca debió salir (EA, Sp., dialogue)	He went back to the place he should never have left
Debieron llamarla PDUSA, no PDVSA (*Rebelión*, Ven.)	They should have called it [i.e. Venezuela Oil Inc.] PDUSA, not PDVSA

(1) But when it is used to express suppositions, the preterite of *deber* may also indicate an assumption or guess so strong as to be a virtual certainty: *lo que ella les dijo debió* (*de*) *convencerlos, ya que al día siguiente le dieron cien mil dólares* 'what she told them must have convinced them since they gave her 100,000 dollars the following day'.

25.3.4 *Tener que*

Tener que expresses a stronger obligation or supposition than *deber.* It is very common on both continents:

Tienes que formatear el disco duro	You have to format the hard disc/disk
Te guste o no tienes que arreglar ese coche (ES, Mex., dialogue)	Like it or not, you've got to fix that car
¿Por qué tuviste que contarles todo?	Why did you have to tell them everything?
Tiene que haberlo hecho Marta	Marta must have done it (supposition)
Tienes que estar loco	You've got to be crazy (supposition)

(1) The preterite indicates an obligation actually carried out: *tuvieron que comprar un televisor nuevo* 'they had to buy a new TV set' tells us that they bought it; *tenían que* does not tell us whether they did or not.

(2) *No tener más remedio que* is a variation of *tener que* often used in everyday language to express very strong obligation: *no tengo más remedio que despedirlo/le* 'I've got no choice but to fire him'.

25.3.5 *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 14.3.4–5) multiplies the number of possibilities:

Ha debido hacerlo/Lo ha debido hacer *Debe haberlo hecho/Lo debe haber hecho*	(S)he must/should have done it
Ha podido hacerlo/Lo ha podido hacer *Puede haberlo hecho/Lo puede haber hecho*	(S)he could have done it
Habían podido hacerlo/Lo habían podido hacer *Podían haberlo hecho/Lo podían haber hecho/*	They could have done it (before)
Habría debido hacerlo/Lo habría debido hacer/Debería haberlo hecho/Lo debería haber hecho (*debiera* can be used for *debería* here)	(S)he ought to have done it
Ha tenido que hacerlo/tiene que haberlo hecho/lo tiene que haber hecho	(S)he must have done it

and also *habría podido hacerlo*, *podría haberlo hecho*, etc. '(s)he might/could have done it'.

25.4 *Haber*

Haber is for forming compound tenses, e.g. *he visto* 'I have seen', *habían vuelto* 'they had returned'. This is discussed at 18.1.

(1) *Haber* with the special present-tense form *hay*, is not an auxiliary verb. It is used to translate 'there is', 'there are', 'there were', etc., as in *hay cincuenta* 'there are fifty', *hubo una explosión* 'there was an explosion'. This is discussed at 34.2.

25.4.1 *Haber de*

In Spain *haber de* is nowadays faintly archaic, at least outside Catalonia. It has the following uses:

(**a**) It expresses obligation or future certainty:

He de hacerlo cuanto antes	I have to do it as soon as possible
Si su compañía tiene bancos de datos que han de ser accesibles desde varias sedes . . . (computer magazine, Sp.)	If your company has data banks that are to be accessed from several sites
Hubo de repetir el experimento (JM, Sp.)	(S)he had to repeat the experiment
las dos tendencias, centralista y federalista, que habían de marcar la historia de Colombia (*Promocomercio*, Col.)	the two tendencies, centralist and federalist, that were to leave their imprint on Colombian history

(**b**) It may express probability or suppositions:

Ha de haberle dicho todo (usually *debe* (*de*) *haberle dicho . . .*)	(S)he must have told her/him everything

This construction is rather literary in Spain but it is very common in Mexico and Central America, e.g. *para terminar, el capitán ha de haberse quejado de su soledad. Serafina ha de haberlo compadecido* (JI, Mex.) 'eventually, the Captain must have complained about his solitude. Serafina must have taken pity on him'; Spain *debió* (*de*) *haberse quejado*, *debió* (*de*) *haberse compadecido de él*.

(**c**) In the conditional or imperfect forms it translates an indignant or mystified 'should . . .'. This usage is normal in spoken and written styles:

¿Por qué habría/había de ofenderse si yo no dije nada? (or, more colloquially, *iba a ofenderse*)	Why should (s)he get offended if I didn't say anything?
¿Por qué habría de acusar a Samuel?	Why would I accuse Samuel?

(1) Catalans sometimes use *haber de* in Castilian to express obligation since their own language uses *haver de* to mean 'must', or 'should'.

25.4.2 *Haber que (hay 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 (GGM, Col.)	There was no need to do an autopsy
Hubo que llamar a los bomberos	It was necessary to call the firemen (implying 'and we did')
Hay que estar loco para viajar de noche en camión (MS, Mex., dialogue. In Spain 'bus' is *el autobús* and *el camión* means 'lorry'/'truck')	You've got to be crazy to travel by bus at night

(1) One should not put an object pronoun before *haber que*, i.e. one says *hay que hacerlo* but not ?*lo hay que hacer.* The latter construction, criticized in *NGLE* 28.6s, is heard in popular speech in certain areas.

(2) *Haber que* is used only in the third person, for which reason a following reflexive pronoun should also be third-person: *hay que levantar**se*** 'we've got to get up', *hay que lavar**se** las manos* 'one has to wash one's hands'. Person-mixing, e.g. ?*hay que levantar**nos*** 'we've got to get up', ?*había que decidir**nos*** 'we had to make up our minds' should be avoided, though it occurs in popular Mexican Spanish (*NGLE* 16.4j).

25.5 *Querer*

25.5.1 *Querer* means 'to want' and 'to love'

Querer means two things, 'to want to' and 'to love'**.** In the latter meaning it can only refer to humans or pets. One can only say ***me encanta** nadar* 'I love swimming', *me encanta/adoro el helado de vainilla* 'I love vanilla ice-cream'. Cf. *quiero a mis hijas* 'I love my daughters'.

Amar indicates very deep love, e.g. love for God or between persons in love: *hay que amar a Dios* 'one must love God', *te amo* 'I adore you', *yo amaba todo* (Espronceda, nineteenth-century poet) 'I loved everything'.

25.5.2 *Querer* in the meaning of 'to want'

In the present tense, this verb should cause English-speakers little trouble: *quiero ir a Paraguay*, 'I want to go to Paraguay', *no quiero que vayan solos* 'I don't want them/you to go alone'. *Querer **que*** requires the subjunctive whatever its tense.

(a) The imperfect of *querer* simply means 'wanted' and does not tell us about the outcome: *quería hablar con José* 'I wanted to talk to José' (and may or may not have done).

(**b**) The preterite of *querer* is peculiar in that out of context it is ambiguous. It may mean 'wanted to and failed': *quise hablar con José* 'I wanted/tried to talk to José (but didn't)'. But in other contexts, and less commonly, it may mean 'wanted to and did', especially when the speaker is being very assertive: *lo hice porque quise* 'I did it because I wanted to (and that's that!)', *me casé con Federico porque quise* (JRIG, Mex., dialogue) 'I married Federico because I wanted to'.

(**c**) The negative preterite form usually means 'to refuse to'. Compare *no quiso hacerlo* '(s)he didn't want to do it' and didn't, and *no quería hacerlo* '(s)he didn't want to do it' – ((s)he may or may not have done it). It can also imply 'didn't mean to' when something unintended happened: *no quise ofenderte* 'I didn't mean to offend you'.

(**d**) The *-ra* imperfect subjunctive form can be used for the conditional: *no querría/quisiera volver a nacer* 'I wouldn't like to be born again'. The imperfect indicative can also be used instead of these two tenses in polite enquiries or requests: *querría/quisiera/quería hablar con el director* 'I would like to speak to the manager'.

25.6 *Soler* and *acostumbrar*

Soler translates the idea of 'usually', 'to be used to'. It is used only in the present and imperfect tenses.

Los zapatos de tacón alto suelen ser incómodos	High-heeled shoes are usually uncomfortable
Solía hablar solo	He used to talk to himself
Suelen disparar uno o varios tiros al aire (MS, Mex., dialogue)	They usually fire one or several shots into the air

(1) *Acostumbrar a* may be used for *soler* when habits or customs are involved, so not **acostumbra a llover en abril* for *suele llover* 'it usually rains in April', which is not a custom or habit. Cf. *no acostumbro a/no suelo salir por la noche* 'I don't usually go out at night-time'. *Acostumbrar* (no *a*) used to be usual in Spain and is still used in Latin America: *se dirige al rancho de un morador, donde acostumbra pernoctar* (MVLl, Pe., Sp. *rancho = choza, casucha*) 'he makes for the hut of a local inhabitant, where he usually spends the night', *las recepciones que acostumbraba organizar* (JV, Mex.) 'the receptions he used to organize'.

(2) In some spoken varieties of Latin-American Spanish, notably in the Southern Cone, *saber* is used for *soler*: *sabe levantarse a las ocho* for *suele levantarse a las ocho* '(s)he usually gets up at eight'. This usage is popular or provincial and it is not found in Spain.

25.7 Translation of miscellaneous English modal verbs: 'would', 'shall', 'will', 'got to'

(**a**) **'Would'**. This may form a conditional: 'it would be better' *sería mejor.*

Important: in English narrative or story-telling, 'would' often means 'used to' and it must then be translated by the imperfect: 'every morning he would leave/he left/he used to leave at seven' *todas las mañanas salía a las siete.* This use of English 'would' must not be translated by the Spanish conditional tense.

(**b**) **'Should'**. This usually means 'ought to', in which case the conditional of *deber* is the translation: 'this should work now' *debería funcionar ahora*. In older English, it may mean the same as the conditional 'would' 'I should/would be very angry if you did it' *me enfadaría mucho si lo hicieras.*

(**c**) **'Ought to'**. The conditional or imperfect of *deber* is the likely equivalent: 'you ought to eat less fat' *deberías/debieras/debías comer menos grasa.* When it refers to the past, the preterite of *deber* is a common translation: *debiste hacerlo antes* 'you ought to have done it sooner'.

(**d**) **'Got to'**. This may imply a strong obligation: 'you've got to work harder' *tienes que trabajar más.* In both American and colloquial British English it may also express a strong supposition: 'it's got to/must be a lie' *debe* (*de*) *ser mentira/tiene que ser mentira.*

26 **Personal *a***

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- Use of personal *a* before direct objects referring to living things (Section 26.2)
- *Me trató* ***como a*** *una reina*, etc. (Section 26.3)
- Personal *a* before pronouns (Section 26.4)
- Personal *a* before personified nouns (Section 26.5)
- Personal *a* with *tener* and *querer* (Section 26.6)
- Personal *a* before collective nouns (Section 26.9)
- Personal *a* before non-living direct objects (Section 26.10)
- Use of the preposition *a* with miscellaneous verbs (Section 26.11)

26.1 **Personal *a*: general**

The use of the preposition *a* before certain kinds of direct object is so important in Spanish that it deserves a special chapter.

The basic rule is that *identified* or *particularized* human and most other animal direct objects are preceded by *a*, e.g. *vi* ***a*** *tu hermana* 'I saw your sister', *conozco* ***a****l secretario* 'I know the secretary'. Compare *vi tu coche* 'I saw your car', *comiste una naranja* 'you ate an orange' (non-human). However, 'personal' *a* is an inaccurate term since the same *a* also sometimes appears with non-living direct objects, especially, but not only, whenever there might be doubt about which is the subject and which is the direct object in the sentence.

26.2 **Personal *a* before direct objects denoting human beings or animals**

Personal *a* is required before a direct object which denotes a known or identified human being or an animal such as a pet or some other familiar creature.

Before a direct object which is a personal name or title—*Alberto*, *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 Elena', *no aguantan al nuevo jefe* 'they can't stand the new boss'. **Vi Mario y Elena* is not Spanish.

With animals, use of personal *a* depends on the extent to which the creature is humanized. A named animal such as a pet is likely to 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 could optionally 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 loveable than cockroaches. Clinical or scientific language would naturally use personal *a* much more sparingly.

In the following examples personal *a* is obligatory except where indicated:

No conozco a Feliciano	I don't know Feliciano
Llevó a las niñas al zoo	(S)he took the girls to the zoo
Jamás volvieron a ver a Amado ni Trini (DES, Mex. Sp. . . . *ni a Trini*)	They never saw Amado or Trini again

No me importa que encuentre al o a los asesinos (LS, Ch., dialogue)	I don't care whether you find the murderer or murderers
Admiran mucho al cámara (cf. *admiran la cámara* 'they admire the camera')	They admire the cameraman a great deal
¿Quieres pasear al/el perro?	Do you want to take the dog for a walk?
Dejad/Dejen de atormentar al/el gato	Stop tormenting the cat

Compare the following sentences in which the object of the verb is not individually particularized:

Busco un marido que me ayude en la casa	I'm looking for a husband who will help me in the house
No conozco un solo farmacéutico en todo Bruselas (ABE, Pe., dialogue)	I don't know a single pharmacist in the whole of Brussels
Veía un chico que jugaba en silencio (ES, Arg.)	I saw a child playing in silence
Los universitarios eligieron una reina de belleza (IA, Ch.)	The university students elected a beauty queen
Matar periodistas no mata la verdad (*Excélsior*, Mex.)	Killing journalists does not kill the truth
Utilizaron un pastor alemán para el experimento	They used an Alsatian/German shepherd dog for the experiment

(1) Important: for the sake of brevity, in this chapter 'human direct object' includes pets and other familiar animals.

(2) Students will come across much inconsistency affecting the rule that unidentified direct objects do not take personal *a*, e.g. *utilizaron a un perro lobo . . .*, *matar a periodistas . . .*, *veía a un chico . . .* Such variations seem to depend on the extent to which the speaker identifies the objects. The *GDLE*, Chapter 28, notes that with some verbs personal *a* is used quite systematically with unidentified persons: *encarcelaron a un narcotraficante* 'they jailed a drug-pusher', not **encarcelaron un . . .*. Likewise *insultar* 'to insult', *curar* 'to cure', *emborrachar* 'to make drunk', *sobornar* 'to bribe', *golpear* 'to hit', *odiar* 'to hate', *hacer* + infinitive 'to make . . .'.

(3) A proper name can denote the person's work, in which case use of *a* is usual: *estoy releyendo a Shakespeare* 'I'm re-reading Shakespeare', *esta noche interpretan a Beethoven* 'tonight they're performing Beethoven'. However, a name may denote a non-living thing, in which case personal *a* is not used: *van a subastar un Turner* 'they're going to auction a Turner (painting)', *procura capturar la reina* 'try to take the queen' (in chess), *¿quién se comió el caballo?* (APR, Sp., dialogue) 'who took the knight?' (in chess: literally 'who ate the horse?').

(4) *Matar* is a special case: *mataron* (*a*) *un transeúnte* 'they killed a passer-by' implies accidentally without the *a*, deliberately with it (based on *GDLE* 28.2.1, though not all speakers recognize this difference.

26.3 Personal *a* with nouns linked by *como*

When a noun is linked by *como* to a previous noun which has personal *a*, or to a pronoun standing for such a noun, it usually also takes personal *a*, although it is sometimes omitted colloquially if there is no ambiguity:

Tuve que recoger a mi hermana como a un fardo	I had to pick my sister up as though she were a bundle
Usted no me considera como a un igual	You don't consider me to be your/an equal

Su reacción fue una de las primeras cosas que delató a Adriano Gómez como a un ser peligroso (JD, Ch.)	His reaction was one of the first things to expose Adriano Gómez as a dangerous person
Me trataba como a una reina (AM, Mex., dialogue)	He used to treat me like a queen

(1) ?*Tuve que recoger a mi hermana como un fardo* sounds like ? 'I had to pick up my sister as though I were a bundle'. But the rule is not always respected in everyday language: *que te trate como una reina* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'let him treat you like a queen'/'get him to treat you like a queen'.

26.4 Personal *a* before pronouns

26.4.1 Before pronouns other than relative pronouns

When a pronoun refers to a human being or familiar animal it takes personal *a*. These pronouns include *alguien*, *alguno*, *uno*, *ambos*, *cualquiera*, *nadie*, *otro*, *ninguno*, *este*, *ese*, *aquel*, *quien/quién*, *todo*, *él*, *ella*, *usted* and other personal pronouns except *me*, *te*, *se*, *nos*, *os*, *le*, *la*, *lo*, *les*, *los*, and *las*. See next section for discussion of the use of personal *a* in relative clauses:

Le quedaban unas horas para buscar a alguien que pudiese ayudarlo a entrar (JV, Mex.)	He had a few hours left to find someone who could help him to get in
La conozco a ella pero no a él	I know her but not him
Aunque yo no conozco a nadie de la gente que viene aquí . . . (CMG, Sp.)	Although I don't know anyone among the people who come here . . .
Era capaz de insultar a cualquiera	(S)he was capable of insulting anybody
¿A quién has visto?	Who(m) did you see?
¿A ese/ése es al que mencionó, no a ti	He's the one (s)he mentioned, not you

(1) Pronouns like *alguien*, *nadie*, *cualquiera* are therefore unusual in that they take personal *a* even though they do not refer to specific individuals.

(2) When *quien* means 'anyone' or 'no one' it does not take personal *a*: *¿a quién llamaste?* 'who(m) did you call/phone?' but *no tenía quien le ayudara/ayudase* '(s)he had no one to help him/her'.

26.4.2 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 *a quien*, *al que* or *al cual* (see 39.4 for discussion).

The relative pronoun *que* is used when the clause is clearly restrictive (as defined at 39.1.2), cf. *vi a varios alumnos que yo no conocía* 'I saw several students who(m) I didn't know' (restrictive); *que* does not take personal *a* when it is not preceded by *el/la/los/las*. But if it is non-restrictive, personal *a* is used though the difference is occasionally elusive. Informants from Spain generally insisted on *a* in the following examples:

Tengo un profesor ***al que/a quien*** *han nombrado miembro de la Academia*	I have a teacher whom they've appointed as a member of the Academy
La persona a quien yo más echaba de menos	The person I missed most
Me dijiste que yo era la primera persona a la que habías querido (ES, Arg. dialogue)	You told me I was the first person you had loved
Plutón, esposo de Proserpina, a la que/a quien/a la cual robó	Pluto, the husband of Proserpine, whom (i.e. Proserpine) he abducted
la lista de personas a las que hemos molestado (*CREA*, Sp.)	the list of people we have bothered

(1) Important: *el que* or *quien* are obligatory in all types of clause if *que* alone creates ambiguities, as it quite often does when it refers to a human being: *esos/ésos son los autores que siempre critican* 'those are the authors whom they always criticize' or 'those are the authors who always criticize'. *A los que* or *a quienes* would clearly mean 'whom they always criticize'.

(2) Personal *a* is rare before relative pronouns referring to non-human objects, but it is occasionally found: *sabe que nosotros no somos como esos árboles* ***a los que*** *se sacude para hacer caer los frutos* (SL, Sp., CREA) 'you know that we aren't like those trees that one shakes to get the fruit to drop'.

26.5 Personal *a* before personified nouns

A personified noun usually requires personal *a*. The decision whether a noun is personified or not is, however, dependent on complex factors of context:

A lo que yo temo es a la maldita casualidad (ABV, Sp., dialogue)	What I'm scared of is damned random chance
Se iba feliz a su casa para no seguir desafiando al azar (GGM, Col.),	He went off happily to his home so as not to go on tempting fate
Los cazas llevan bengalas para confundir a un misil dirigido	The fighters carry flares to confuse a guided missile
Bien sabes cuánto temo a los huracanes (PJG, Cu., dialogue)	You well know how scared I am of hurricanes

(1) The last three examples show how certain verbs, e.g. *admirar* 'to admire', *confundir* 'to confuse', *criticar* 'to criticize', *insultar* 'to insult', *odiar* 'to hate', *satirizar* 'to satirize', *sobrevivir a* 'to survive', *temer* 'to fear', etc., tend by their meaning to personify their object because they suggest a human-like reaction. They therefore sometimes appear with personal *a* even before non-living things, which explains – but does not excuse – sentences like ?*criticaba a las novelas de fulano* '(s)he criticized so-and-so's novels' (correct without the *a*).

26.6 Personal *a* after *tener, querer*

These verbs may change their meaning when used with personal *a*:

Tengo un hijo y una hija	I've got a son and a daughter
Tenemos una asistenta griega	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/cans and frozen food
Tengo a mi tío como fiador	I've got my uncle to act as guarantor
querer un hijo	to want a child/son
querer a un hijo	to love a child/son

(1) *Tengo un hijo/novio* 'I have a son/boyfriend' does not make the direct object specific or identified, whereas *Gracias a Dios tenía a mi hermana mayor, a la que sigo queriendo mucho* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'thank God I had my elder sister who I love a lot' refers to an identified individual.

If possession is not implied, *tener* usually takes *a* before human objects *el fenómeno tiene boquiabiertos a los astrónomos* 'the phenomenon has astronomers astounded', *tiene a su novia*

medio loca de celos 'he's got his girlfriend half crazy with jealousy', *no tenía a nadie . . . con quien hablar en español* (DES, Mex.) 'he had no one to talk with in Spanish', *vamos fuera. Tengo a la chica esperando con el coche* (LS, Sp., dialogue) 'Let's go outside. I've got the girl waiting with the car'.

26.7 Omission of personal *a* before numerals

Nouns preceded by a number may be unspecified or unidentified and personal *a* is sometimes omitted before them:

Reclutaron (*a*) *doscientos jóvenes*	They recruited 200 young people
Bayardo San Román . . . vio las dos mujeres vestidas de negro (GGM, Col.)	Bayardo San Román saw the two women dressed in black
Solo/sólo conozco un hombre capaz de componer esta emboscada maestra (. . . *a un hombre* also possible)	I only know one man capable of organizing this brilliant ambush

(1) A clearly particularized or identified personal noun will, however, take personal *a*: *yo conocía personalmente a sus tres hijas* 'I knew his three daughters personally', *en realidad aborrece a los dos* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'actually he loathes both of them'.

26.8 Personal *a* combined with dative *a*

Ambiguity may arise when two *a*s occur in the same sentence, e.g. ?*presenté a mi marido a mi jefe* 'I introduced my husband to my boss' or '. . . my boss to my husband'. The usual solution used to be to omit personal *a* and place the direct object before the indirect object:

Presenté mi marido a mi jefe	I introduced my husband to my boss
Denuncié el ladrón al guardia	I reported the thief to the policeman
Mande el paciente al especialista	Send the patient to the specialist
Yo prefiero Dickens a Balzac	I prefer Dickens to Balzac

But the *NGLE* 34.10r notes that the tendency nowadays is to use both *a*s and say *presenté a mi marido a mi jefe*, *mande al paciente al especialista*, *prefiero a Dickens a Balzac*. *Ignacio le presentó a Adriana a Luis* (JV, Mex. Personal *a* is obligatory before the personal name *Luis*) 'Ignacio introduced Luis to Adriana', *pero antes de entrar en detalles . . . quisiera presentarles a ustedes a nuestros invitados* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'But before going into detail . . . I'd like to introduce our guests to you' (the *les* shows that *ustedes* is the indirect object).

26.9 Personal *a* before collective nouns

Personal *a* is usual before collective nouns when these refer to human beings:

Yo no conocía al resto del grupo	I didn't know the rest of the group
. . . un paso que podría poner a Estados Unidos en una posición delicada (*La Prensa*, Arg.)	. . . a step which could put the United States in a delicate position
Eso pondría en peligro a la compañía	That would put the company in danger
Admiro al pueblo cubano	I admire the Cuban people
La explosión aterró a la ciudad	The explosion terrified the city
Sacudió a la sociedad mexicana (EP, Mex.)	It shook Mexican society

(1) *A* is normal in all the above examples, but in the following sentences *Irán* does not refer to people but to a place: *en septiembre del año siguiente, Irak invadió Irán* (*CREA*, Mex.) 'in September of the following year Iraq invaded Iran'. But as so often with personal *a*, usage is fickle: *la comunista Corea del Norte invadió* ***a*** *Corea del Sur en junio de 1950* (*CREA*, Pan.) 'communist North Korea invaded South Korea in June 1950'.

(2) Before words like *país*, *nación*, *partido*, *movimiento*, when these words refer to people, *a* seems to be optional: *criticó duramente al/el movimiento anarquista* '(s)he criticized the anarchist movement severely', *Luis García Meza, quien gobernó el país entre julio de 1980 y agosto de 1981* (*El País*, Sp., *al* possible) 'Luis García Meza, who governed the country between July 1980 and August 1981'.

(3) Seeing, visiting, leaving, picturing or painting a place do not call for personal *a*: *estamos deseando ver Lima* 'we're longing to see Lima', *esta/ésta es la segunda ocasión que visito Alemania* (JH, Mex., dialogue) 'this is the second time I've visited Germany', *quería pintar Toledo* '(s)he wanted to paint Toledo', *abandonaron Madrid* 'they left Madrid'. The Academy used to maintain that *a* was necessary in such sentences but it now considers the omission of *a* to be correct.

26.10 Personal *a* before non-living direct objects

Personal *a* cannot appear before a noun denoting a non-living direct object in straightforward sentences of the following kind:

Mándales un texto	Send them a text message
Escribe poesía	(S)he writes poetry
Tus palabras delataban tu derrotismo	Your words betrayed your defeatism

But, despite its name, personal *a* is sometimes used before non-living objects. This may happen:

(**a**) when there is likely to be uncertainty about which is the subject and which the direct object of a verb. This often – but not only – happens in relative clauses, where the verb often precedes the subject. *Una organización que protege* ***a*** *su coche* can only mean 'an organization that protects your car', but *una organización que protege su coche* might mean '. . . that your car protects':

Este producto es el que mejor impermeabiliza ***al*** *algodón*	This product is the one that best waterproofs cotton
Es difícil saber en qué medida afectó esto a la economía cubana (MVLl, Pe.)	It is difficult to know to what extent this affected the Cuban economy
¿Cómo afecta a tu salud el problema de Volkswagen? (*Excélsior*, Mex.)	How does the Volkswagen [emissions] problem affect your health?
A tres Autos y un Comercio quemaron (Latin-American headline, strange to speakers of European Spanish)	Three Cars and Store Burnt (lit. 'they burnt' three cars and a store')

(**b**) sometimes before non-living direct objects when both subject and object are non-living, even though there is apparently no danger of ambiguity.

It seems that this occurs only in those sentences in which the subject is also the real 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 real agents of the action are the person who threw the stone or wrote the novel: *piedra* and *novela* are simply instruments and for this reason personal *a* is not used. However, if the non-living subject really performs the action, personal *a* may *optionally* appear before the direct object:

Ambos creían que los astros regían a las pasiones (OP, Mex.)	Both believed the stars ruled the passions
. . . soluciones mixtas de un litro embozadas en bolsas negras para proteger a la ponzoña de la luz (JH, Mex.)	. . . one-litre/liter mixed solutions wrapped in black bags to protect the poison from the light
El suicidio de la muchacha . . . excitó a la opinión pública (MVLl, Pe.)	The girl's suicide . . . stirred public opinion
Este fenómeno caracteriza al norte de Escocia	This phenomenon is characteristic of northern Scotland

A could be omitted in all the examples under (**b**).

(c) Often after impersonal *se* in order to show that the *se* really is impersonal *se* and not some other kind of *se* such as reflexive *se* or passive *se* (see Chapter 32 for the uses of *se*).

. . . la plataforma, como se llama ***a*** *los andenes en Inglaterra* (JM, Sp.)	. . . the 'platform', as they call the *andén* (of a railway station) in England
En España se llamaba ***a*** *la plata* (Sp. *dinero*) *de los cohechos y sobornos "unto de México"* (OP, Mex., cf. *la plata se llamaba* 'money was called . . .')	In Spain they used to call the money from bribery and graft 'Mexican grease'
La inversión es indispensable si se quiere convertir al sistema ferroviario en un sector atractivo para los inversionistas (*La Hora*, Ec.)	Investment is essential if one wishes to turn the railroad system into an attractive sector for investors

(1) Omitting *a* in such sentences could cause ambiguities or an awkward sentence. . . . *si se quiere convertir el sistema ferroviario* could be read as 'if the railway system wants to be converted into . . .'

26.11 *A* obligatory or preferred with certain verbs

Some verbs always take the preposition *a*, e.g. *agarrarse a* 'to hold on to', *asociarse a* 'to associate oneself with', *seguir a* 'to follow', *suceder a* 'to follow', *sustituir a* 'to substitute', *renunciar a* 'to renounce', *ayudar a* 'to help', *gustar/agradar a* 'to please', etc. However, this *a* is usually not personal *a* but some other use of the preposition *a*:

Considera que la opción más sabia es renunciar gradualmente a la energía nuclear (*El País*, Sp.)	He considers that the wisest option is to gradually give up nuclear energy
Los dirigentes nacionales renunciaron a sus puestos en el sindicato (JA, Mex.)	The national leaders gave up their positions in the union
Esto obedece a unas normas de comportamiento	This obeys certain norms of behaviour
Le gustaba todo lo que le gustara a su mujer, pero no que su mujer les gustara tanto a los hombres (MVM, Sp.)	He liked everything his wife liked but not the fact that men liked his wife so much
Este nuevo producto ayuda al cabello a recobrar su brillo natural	This new product helps the hair recover its natural shine

Other similar verbs are: *acompañar a* 'accompany', *afectar a* 'to affect', *atender a* 'to pay attention to', *asentir a* 'to agree with', *asistir a* 'to be present at', *contestar a* 'to reply to', *contribuir a* 'to contribute to', *corresponder a* 'to correspond to'/'to reciprocate', *equivaler a* 'to be equivalent to', *sucumbir a* 'to succumb to', *superar a* 'to out-perform', *sustituir a* 'to replace'.

27 Negation

The Spanish negative words and phrases discussed in this chapter are:

- *no* (Section 27.2)
- 'Redundant *no*' (Section 27.2.4)
- Single and double negatives (Section 27.3)
- 'anyone', 'anything', 'ever', etc. (Section 27.4)*
- *nada* and *nadie* (Section 27.5.1–3)
- *ni* (Section 27.5.4)
- *ninguno* (Section 27.5.5)
- *nunca* and *jamás* (Section 27.5.6)
- *apenas* (Section 27.5.7)
- *en mi vida*, etc. (Section 27.5.8)
- *en absoluto* (Section 27.5.9)
- *tampoco* (Section 27.5.10)
- *nomás* (Section 27.6)

*i.e. in sentences like 'bigger than **ever**', 'it's impossible to see **anything**', 'why blame **anyone**?', where the words in bold are translated by *nunca*, *nada* and *nadie*.

27.1 General

Matters that cause problems for English speakers are: the 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' (see 27.3), sentences like *¿quién ha dicho* ***nunca*** *eso?* 'who **ever** said that?'(see 27.4), and the use of 'redundant' *no*, e.g. *¡cuántas veces* ***no*** *te habré dicho!* 'how many times have I told you?!' (see 27.2.4).

27.2 *No*

27.2.1 Use and position

No means both 'no' and 'not': this chapter is concerned with the latter meaning. *No* usually precedes the word that it negates, but object pronouns (*me*, *te*, *se*, *lo*, *la*, *nos*, *os*, *les*, *los*, *las*) are never separated from a verb: *no dije eso* 'I didn't say that', but *no* ***lo*** *dije nunca* 'I never said it', never ***no lo nunca dije*:

Mario no estaba	Mario wasn't there
No perdamos tiempo	Let's not waste time
No todos son capaces de tocar el piano	Not everyone is capable of playing the piano
Arguyen—y no sin razón—que . . .	They argue – and not without reason – that . . .
No intentabas verla	You weren't trying to see her
Intentabas no verla	You were trying not to see her

(1) If a verb has been deleted, *no* retains its position: *bebe cerveza pero no bebe vino—bebe cerveza, pero no vino* '(s)he drinks beer but not wine', *—¿Sabéis nadar? —Yo sí, pero él no* '"Can you swim?" "I can, but he can't"'. But in emphatic denials it may follow a noun or pronoun: *¡bases nucleares no!* 'no nuclear bases!', *ah no, eso no . . .* 'oh no, not that . . .', *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'.

(2) Important: compound tenses do not allow participle deletion in Spanish. In other words, the answer to *¿lo has visto?* 'have you seen him/it?' is *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 with the pluperfect: see 18.1.2 note 1 for an example.

(3) Deletion of a gerund or infinitive is, however, possible: —*¿Estabas comiendo? —No, no estaba* '"Were you eating?" "No I wasn't"', —*¿Quieres venir?—No, no quiero* '"Do you want to come?" "No I don't"'.

(4) If it means 'non-' or 'un-', *no* precedes the noun or adjective: *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* (JM, Sp.) 'it's the only non-real/unreal image in the whole book'.

27.2.2 'No' and *no* contrasted

The English word 'no' may require translation in various different ways:

Look, no hands!	*Mira, ¡sin manos!*
'What's the problem?' 'No money'.	*—¿Cuál es el problema? —No tengo/tiene/tenemos/tienen* (etc.) *dinero*
no petrol/US no gas	*No hay gasolina/Se nos acabó la gasolina*
no smoking	*prohibido fumar/no fumar*
no way!	*¡ni hablar!/¡de eso nada!*
no kidding?!	*¿en serio?*
There's no need for arguments	*No hay por qué discutir*

27.2.3 *No* as a question tag

¿No? at the end of a statement implies that the asker already knows or guesses the answer:

Usted habla inglés, ¿no?	You speak English, don't you?
Mejor tarde que nunca, ¿no?	Better late than never, don't you think?
Usted sabe que a veces es bueno decir mentiras, por algo es periodista ¿no? (ES, Mex., dialogue)	You know that it's sometimes good to tell lies. You're not a journalist for nothing are you?

27.2.4 'Redundant' *no*

An apparently superfluous *no* is inserted in certain types of sentence, more often it seems in Spain than in Latin America:

(**a**) In informal language redundant *no* is sometimes used in comparisons, especially before an infinitive or to avoid two *que*s side-by-side:

Más vale que vengas conmigo que (*no*) *que te quedes solo aquí* (or *. . . a que te quedes solo*)	Better come with me than stay here alone
Mejor gastar cinco mil ahora que (*no*) *tener que comprar un coche nuevo para el verano*	Better spend five thousand now than have to buy a new car by summer

La obra de R. vale más para un conocimiento de la derecha que no para conocer la República	R.'s work is more useful for learning about the Right than knowing about the Republic
. . . con los ojos más luminosos, más tristes y más agradecidos que ella no le vio nunca . . . (GM, Col.)	. . . with the most luminous, saddest and most grateful eyes she had ever seen in him . . .

(**b**) Optionally in interjections involving *cuánto* or *qué de* 'how much', 'how many' and also after *cuál* in exclamations.

¡Cuántas veces no lo había soñado en los últimos tiempos! (LG, Sp.)	How often he had dreamt of it lately!
¡Cuántas veces no me la habré jugado por él! (ES, Mex., dialogue)	How many times have I risked my life for him!
¡Qué de angustias (*no*) *habrán pasado!*	What tough times they must have gone through!
Cuál no sería mi sorpresa cuando a los dos meses . . . me lo encuentro a la salida del Sarape (ES, Mex., dialogue)	Imagine my surprise when two months later I run [historic present] into him on the way out of the Sarape Club

The *no* makes it clear that the sentence is an exclamation, not a question: cf. *¿cuántas veces te lo he dicho?* 'how many times have I told you?'

(**c**) Optionally, but very often, after *hasta que* 'until' when pointing to a future event or a future in the past, and also in negative sentences:

. . . su prohibición de salir del país hasta que no se haya hecho firme el auto (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	. . . his being banned from leaving the country until the judicial order is confirmed
Y todo el mundo tiene derecho a que se le trate como inocente hasta que no se pruebe lo contrario (LS, Sp., dialogue)	And everyone has a right to be treated as innocent until the opposite is proved
Adolfito, hasta que no te tomes el bocadillo no te vas a jugar (EA, Sp., dialogue)	Adolfo, you're not going out to play until you finish your sandwich
Quítale la cámara a este muchacho . . . y no se la devuelvas hasta que no aprenda a hacer buen uso de ella (LR, Col., dialogue)	Take this boy's camera away from him and don't give it back to him until he learns how to use it properly

(**d**) Occasionally in literary language 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 (s)he might have suffered some misfortune
Tenía miedo no (or *tenía miedo de que*) *lo/le vieran/viesen desde arriba*	He was afraid that they would see him from above

(1) *No* is not used if the clause after *hasta* refers to a certainty or to something that has happened: *insistió en quedarse en el aeropuerto hasta que la avioneta se perdió de vista* (EM, Mex.) 'he insisted on staying at the airport until the (light) plane disappeared from view', *me quedaré aquí hasta que se ponga el sol* 'I'll stay here until the sun sets'.

(2) *Hasta* can also have a negative meaning in the Spanish of Mexico, Central America, Colombia and a few other places: *perdona que te llame hasta ahora* means *perdona que no te haya llamado hasta ahora*. 'sorry I haven't called you until now'. See 38.14 note 1.

27.3 Double negatives

One may say *nadie vino* or *no vino nadie* 'no one came'. As the second example shows, if a negative follows a verb a negative must also precede the verb. Moreover, if a word is negated, all the following words in the sentence must be negated if possible: *pero una no debe esperar nunca nada de un hombre sino malas noticias* (CRG, Sp.) 'but one (fem.) should never expect anything from a man except bad news', *nunca hay nada nuevo en ninguna parte* (CS, Mex., dialogue) 'there's never anything new anywhere'.

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 (27.5.1–10) give guidance on this subject, but it may be said in general that (**a**) the single negative is more typical of written language when the negated word is the object of a verb, as in *nada prometen que después traicionen* (L. Cernuda, poetry, Sp.) 'they [i.e. violets] promise nothing that they then betray' (*nada* is the direct object), spoken Spanish *no prometen nada que . . .*; (**b**) the single negative is not used to reply to questions (*NGLE* 48.3k): —*¿Qué dijo?* —*No dijo nada* (not *nada dijo*) '"What did (s)he say?" "(S)he didn't say anything?"':

Double negatives

No dice nada	(S)he says nothing
Nadie dijo nada	No one said anything
Nadie había visto nada; nadie sabía nada (HR, Mex.)	No one had seen anything, no one knew anything
Apenas come nada	(S)he scarcely eats anything
Tampoco vino nadie	Nor did anyone come
Nunca trae ninguno	(S)he never brings a single one
Pero no había ningún otro síntoma (EL, Arg.)	But there was no other symptom
No sabe ni latín ni francés	(S)he knows neither Latin nor French
No la he visto nunca con nadie	I've never seen her with anyone

Single negatives

Tampoco vino	(S)he didn't come either
Apenas habla	(S)he scarcely talks
Nadie sabe cuánto se lava (*Excélsior*, Mex.)	No one knows how much [money] is being laundered
Ninguna era más bella que ella	No woman was more beautiful than her
Jamás/Nunca la volvería a ver	(S)he was never to see her again

(1) The double negative can be ambiguous, although intonation or context usually make the meaning clear: *lo que dice no es nada* 'what (s)he says is nothing' (i.e. worthless) or 'what (s)he says isn't nothing' (i.e. it *is* something); *no llora por nada* '(s)he doesn't cry over nothing'/'(s)he doesn't cry over anything'; cf. *llora por nada* '(s)he cries over nothing'. *No llora sin motivo* expresses the first idea unambiguously.

(2) Important: only one preceding negative word is allowed in Spanish: compare French ***personne ne*** *savait la vérité* and *nadie sabía la verdad* 'no one knew the truth', never **nadie no sabía la verdad*; *de ninguna manera pensaban hacerlo* 'in no way were they thinking of doing it', never **de ninguna manera no pensaban*, *no lo dije nunca* I never said it', never **nunca no lo dije.*

Exception: the double preceding negative *nunca nadie/nadie nunca* can be used: *nunca nadie ha dicho eso* 'no one has ever said that', *nunca nadie supo decirle el porqué de ese Ynés con i griega* (JMs, Sp.) 'no one was ever able to tell him the reason for that "Ynés" with a "Y"', *nadie nunca ha visto a*

Abraham (MC, Mex., dialogue) 'No one has ever seen Abraham'. The same idea can be expressed by *nadie ha dicho eso nunca*, or *nunca ha dicho eso nadie*, or *no ha dicho eso nunca nadie*. The combination *nunca jamás* is also possible. See 27.5.6.

(3) A compound preceding negative linked with *y* is also possible, at least in literary styles, as in *en ningún momento y en ninguna parte había visto que volara/volase un elefante* 'never and nowhere had (s)he seen an elephant fly'/'(s)he had never seen anywhere an elephant fly'.

27.4 *Nada, nadie, nunca, jamás, ninguno* in sentences that are affirmative in form or meaning

Even though they are listed as negative words, these words can have the meaning of 'anything', 'ever', 'anyone', 'anything' in the following contexts. In some cases, either they or their affirmative equivalent can be used without a significant change of meaning:

(**a**) After comparisons:

*Más que **nada**, es taimado*	More than **anything**, he's cunning
*Me irrité más por eso que por **nada***	I got irritated more because of that than because of anything else
*Podría ser la mayor esfera tallada **nunca** por manos humanas* (*El Periódico*, Sp.)	It could be the largest sphere **ever** carved by human hands
Salió más temprano que nunca (AM, Mex., dialogue; not *jamás*)	She went out earlier than ever before
. . . y allí un capataz, el mejor que jamás hubiera (MP, Arg., dialogue)	. . . and a foreman there – the best that ever was
Este libro es más complicado que ninguno de los que yo he leído	This book is more complicated than any I've read
Es más lista que ninguno de los otros	She's cleverer than any of the others
la mayor tontería que haya dicho nadie	the most stupid thing anyone has said

(**b**) In sentences which involve expressions of doubt, denial, abstention, impossibility, etc.:

Es dudoso que nadie/alguien pueda pasar por nativo en más de tres idiomas	It's doubtful whether anyone can pass as a native in more than three languages
Hace mucho que nadie me traía flores (MC, Mex., dialogue)	It's been a long time since anyone brought me flowers
. . . sin nada ni nadie en el mundo	. . . without anything or anybody in the world
Se negó siquiera a hablar a nadie de la emisora (GCI, Cu.)	He even refused to talk to anyone from the radio station
Es demasiado difícil para que nadie/alguien entienda esto	It's too difficult for anyone to understand it
Es imposible ver nada de lo que está sucediendo	It's impossible to see anything of what's going on
Pocos libros dirían nada semejante	Few books would say anything similar
No tolera que nadie lo contradiga (EM, Mex.)	He can't stand anyone contradicting him
Es horrible contar todo esto a nadie/alguien	It's horrible to tell all this to anyone/someone
Yo no sé dónde está nada en esta casa	I don't know where anything is in this house

(**c**) In questions or exclamations that expect a negative answer:

¿A usted cuándo le han preguntado nada/algo?	When did anyone ask you anything?
¿Quién ha visto a nadie/alguien que trabaje más que él?	Who has ever seen anyone who works more than he does?
¿Para qué despedirme de nada ni de nadie? (AG, Sp.)	Why should I say goodbye to anyone or anything?
¿Quién puede pensar en nada cuándo se está rodeado de idiotas? (CS, Mex., dialogue)	Who can think of anything when one's surrounded by idiots?
¿Quién hubiera pensado nunca/jamás/alguna vez que se casaría con Julia?	Who would ever have thought he'd have married Julia?

(**d**) After *antes de*, *antes que*, and *sin*

He venido sin nada	I've come without anything
sin nadie que lo/le cuidara/cuidase	without anyone to look after him
Él tenía la culpa por llegar antes que nadie (CF, Mex.)	It was his fault for arriving before anyone else
Esto hay que hacerlo antes de empezar nada	This must be done before starting anything else

(1) 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/llamase nadie* 'I'd be surprised if *anyone* rang me'; *sentiría que nadie me viera así/que me viera/viese así nadie* 'I'd be sorry if anyone sees me (looking) like this', *sentiría que nadie me viera/viese así/sentiría que no me viera/viese así nadie* 'I'd be sorry if no one sees me (looking) like this'.

(2) In sentences in which English allows 'something' after 'without' Spanish allows *algo*: *. . . sin que nadie pudiera hacer algo para impedirlo* (LS, Mex., *hacer nada* also possible) '. . . without anyone being able to do anything/something to stop it', but *no podía dormir sin que algo* (not *nada*) *la despertara/despertase* 'she couldn't sleep without something waking her up'.

27.5 Further remarks on individual negative words

27.5.1 *Nada, nadie*

(**a**) When *nada* or *nadie* are a direct object or a predicate or follow a preposition, they usually appear in the double negative construction in ordinary language:

No sé nada	I know nothing/I don't know anything
No sé nada de nada	I don't know anything about anything
Contestó que no conocía a nadie (NC, Mex.)	She replied that she knew no one
No hay nada/nadie	There's nothing/nobody
No lo haría por nada/nadie	I wouldn't do it for anything/anyone

But in literary or emotive styles they may precede the verb:

Desde hace tiempo para nadie es desconocido que el Sol emite rayos ultravioletas (*Granma*, Cu.)	For some time now no one has been unaware of the fact that the sun gives off ultraviolet rays
A nadie conozco más apto para esta labor literaria	I know no one more suited for this literary task
Por nada del mundo quisiera perderme eso (set phrase in everyday use)	I wouldn't miss that for anything in the world

A nadie podía pedirle cuentas sino a Félix Maldonado (CF, Mex.)	He couldn't demand an explanation from anyone except Félix Maldonado

In all these cases the double negative would have been plainer style, e.g. *no es desconocido para nadie*, *no conozco a nadie . . .*, *no quisiera perderme eso por nada . . .*, etc.

(**b**) When *nada* or *nadie* are the subject of a verb they usually precede it (single negative):

Nada parece cierto en todo esto	Nothing seems certain in all this
Dentro de la pensión reinaba el silencio, como si nadie la habitara (JMs, Sp.)	Inside the boarding-house silence reigned, as if no one were living in it
Nada en el mundo nos podrá separar (AA, Cu., dialogue)	Nothing in the world will be able to separate us
Nada en la pieza es histórico (MVLl, Pe. Sp. *nada en la obra . . .*)	Nothing in the play is historical
En caso de que lo atacaran nadie saldría a defenderlo (MS, Mex.)	In the event of anyone attacking him no one would come forward to defend him
Nadie cree eso ya	No one believes that any more

(1) A double negative construction is frequent in questions: *¿no ha venido nadie?* 'hasn't anyone come?', *¿no llueve nunca aquí?* 'doesn't it ever rain here?'/'does it never rain here?', *¿cuando te fuiste no viste a nadie?* (EN, Sp., dialogue) 'when you left didn't you see anyone?' But a single negative is also possible: *¿por qué nadie les hizo caso a los científicos de Nuevo México?* (MC, Mex., dialogue) 'why did no one listen to the scientists in New Mexico?'

27.5.2 *Nada* as intensifier

Nada may be used as an adverb meaning 'not at all':

Manuel no trabaja nada	Manuel does absolutely no work
No hemos dormido nada	We haven't slept a wink
La separación de su marido no había sido nada dramática (SP, Sp.)	The break from her husband had not been at all dramatic
No me gusta nada lo que acabas de decir (ABE, Pe., dialogue)	I really don't like what you just said
La junta no empezó nada bien (MS, Mex., Sp. *la reunión no empezó . . .*)	The meeting didn't start too well

(1) In the spoken language of many Latin-American countries, *nada* is used extensively as an adverb: *acá en Chihuahua no llueve nada, nos morimos de calor* 'there's not a drop of rain here in Chihuahua, we're dying from heat', *ayuda no me dieron nada* 'they didn't help me at all',

27.5.3 *Nadie*: further remarks

Nadie takes personal *a* if it is the object of a verb:

Apenas conozco a nadie	I hardly know anybody
No se veía a nadie en la playa	There was no one to be seen on the beach
Di que hoy no quiero ver a nadie (DT, Mex., dialogue)	Say that I don't want to see anybody today

(1) *Nadie de* should not be followed by a plural noun or pronoun: *nadie de mi familia* 'no one in my family' but *ninguna de las alumnas* 'none of the female students'; *ninguno de nosotros salimos* 'none

of us went out', *ninguno de los pasajeros hizo comentario alguno* (MVLl, Pe.) 'none of the passengers made any comment', *ninguno de sus agentes iba al aeropuerto tal como él les había solicitado* (MS, Mex., dialogue) 'none of his agents/officers was going to the airport as he had asked them to'.

27.5.4 *Ni*

'Nor', 'neither'. As with other negative words, if *ni* follows the verb, the verb must itself be negated: compare *ni tú ni yo lo sabemos* 'neither you nor I know (it)' and *no lo sabemos ni tú ni yo*. 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 Marta* 'neither Antonio, Pilar, Ana nor Marta has arrived' (first *ni* optional). Examples of the use of *ni*:

Vives en el siglo pasado . . . no tienes computadora, ni celular, ni fax, ni auto, ni tarjetas de crédito y ni siquiera una contestadora telefónica (GZ, Mex., dialogue) In Spain *computadora=ordenador*, *celular = móvil*, *auto=coche*, *contestadora = contestador*)	You live in the past century . . . you don't have a computer or a mobile/cell phone or fax, or a car, or credit cards or even an answering machine
No hay nada que me ligue ni con él ni contigo (CF, Mex., dialogue)	There's nothing linking me to him or to you
Ni fumo ni bebo/No fumo ni bebo	I neither smoke nor drink
No hubo tiempo ni de llamar a una ambulancia (CMG, Sp.)	There wasn't even time to call an ambulance
Ni con ella, ni con nadie, me puedo comunicar (MP, Arg., dialogue)	I can't communicate with her or with anybody

(1) *Ni* commonly translates 'not even': *y ni la conoces. ¿O sí?'. . .* and you don't even know her. Or do you?' (WL, Mex., dialogue). It is very often reinforced by *siquiera*: *ni siquiera podía recordar si había sido verano u otoño* (JV, Mex.) 'he couldn't even remember whether it had been summer or autumn', *eres un inútil, ni siquiera sabes freírte un huevo* 'you're useless, you can't even fry yourself an egg'.

(2) Before a noun *ni* may make a strong 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"'.

(3) *Ni* is required after *sin*: *vivía sin dinero ni ganas de tenerlo* '(s)he lived without money or the urge to have it', *sin mujer ni hijos* 'without wife or children', *las rarezas climáticas se sucedieron sin ton ni son* (*Excélsior*, Mex.) 'strange climatic events occurred chaotically one after another'.

(4) The following Latin-American sentence, *si no te gusta lárgate que ni haces falta* (AM, Mex., dialogue) 'if you don't like it go away, because you're not even needed' would be expressed in Spain by *. . . que no haces falta*.

27.5.5 *Ninguno*

'No', 'none', 'nobody' (cf. French *aucun*, German *kein*). The double negative rule applies: if *ninguno* follows the verb, the verb must be negated: *ninguno de ellos lo sabe/no lo sabe ninguno de ellos* 'none of them knows it', *nunca compra ninguno* '(s)he never buys a single one'. In certain types of sentences it may be an equivalent of 'any': see 27.4 for examples.

Ninguno may be either an adjective or a pronoun. As an adjective it loses its final *-o* before masculine nouns or noun phrases: *en ningún momento pensé que . . .* 'at no point did I think that . . .', *la gente piensa que los matemáticos no tenemos ningún contacto con el mundo, pero no es cierto . . .* (JV, Mex., dialogue) 'people think that we mathematicians have no contact with the world, but it isn't true'; but *no aceptaremos ninguna solución parcial* 'we will accept no partial (or 'biased') solution'.

(**a**) Pronominal forms

Ninguno de los que hablan un idioma está libre de dudas (Manuel Seco, Sp.)	None of those who speak a language is free of doubts
O se lleva todos, o ninguno	Either you take/(s)he takes them all, or none
Llamo a mis hermanas pero ninguna responde (EM, Mex., dialogue. Sp. *ninguna contesta*)	I call/phone my sisters but none of them is answering
Si he sido insincero con ninguno/alguno de vosotros, decídmelo (*ninguno* is literary)	If I have been insincere with any of you, tell me so

(**b**) Adjectival forms

Otra vez el Oscar no incluye a ningún actor negro (*Excélsior*, Mex.)	Once again the Oscar list features no black actor
Tampoco recibimos ninguna contestación/ —Si es molestia, puedo esperar—. Molestia ninguna/Ninguna molestia	Neither did we receive any reply 'If it's a nuisance I can wait.' 'No nuisance at all'
Había llegado al climaterio con tres hijas y ningún varón (GGM, Col.),	She had reached the menopause with three daughters and no males

(1) Important: *ningún* is usual in speech before feminine nouns beginning with stressed *a-* or *ha-*, but it should be written in full, e.g. *ninguna arma nuclear*. Seco (1998, 307), rejects written forms like ?*ningún arma*.

(2) Important: *alguno*, placed after the noun, may be used as an emphatic alternative to *ninguno*: *no hay motivo alguno = no hay motivo ninguno*. See 10.4.1 note 1 for details.

(3) The plural *ningunos/ningunas* is rare since one usually does not 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* (AM, Mex., dialogue) 'in a word, he was eighteen and had no desire to go back to the village'.

(4) When *ninguno* is the subject of a verb, person and number agreement seems to be optional when a pronoun appears: *ninguna de nosotras tiene/tenemos marido* 'none of us women has a husband', *ninguno de vosotros habéis/ha traído el libro* 'none of you has brought the book'.

If the pronoun is omitted, the verb ending must make the meaning clear: *ninguno hemos dicho eso* 'none of us said that', *¿no salisteis* (Lat. Am. *salieron*) *ninguna anoche?* 'didn't any of you girls/women go out last night?'. Compare *¿no salió ninguna anoche?* 'didn't any of the girls/women go out last night?'.

(5) If *ninguno* is a direct or indirect object and is placed before the verb, the redundant pronoun (explained at 14.10) agrees with the accompanying noun or pronoun: *a ninguno de ellos* ***los*** *conozco* 'I don't know any of them', *y si te soy franca a ninguno de nosotros* ***nos*** *pareció bien que fueras mujer* (SG, Mex., dialogue) 'and if I'm honest with you, none of us approved of the fact that you were a woman'.

27.5.6 *Nunca* and *jamás*

Both mean 'never' or, in certain sentences, 'ever'. *Jamás* is somewhat stronger and less common than *nunca*. It is usually identical in meaning to *nunca*, but see note 1. The combination *nunca jamás* is strongly emphatic: *nunca jamás le vi escuchar "La Internacional"* (DES Mex., dialogue) 'Never once did I see him listening to The Internationale'.

Both require a double negative construction when they follow the verb phrase to which they refer: *nunca viene = no viene nunca* '(s)he never comes', *jamás viene nadie* 'no one ever comes'. When placed before the verb, they are stronger in meaning: *nunca he oído cosa/nada semejante* 'I *never* heard anything like that', *nunca se sabe muy bien por qué ni para qué pasan las cosas* (LS, Sp.) 'one *never* really knows why things happen and to what purpose':

Yo nunca/jamás conocí a un extranjero que hablase/hablara tan bien (*el*) *español*	I've never met a foreigner who spoke Spanish so well
Jamás imaginó que su hijo pudiera caer preso (EP, Mex.)	She never imagined her son might be arrested
No sale nunca/jamás de casa	(S)he never goes out of the house

(1) *Jamás* cannot appear after comparisons, i.e. after *más que* or *menos que*: *ahora más que nunca* 'now more than ever', *trabaja menos que nunca* '(s)he's working less than ever'.

Jamás usually appears before the verb: *y así jamás tuvo problema para ser aceptado en Madrid* (JM, Sp.) 'so he never had any trouble in being accepted in Madrid'.

(2) 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/mordiese a un perro?* 'who ever heard (lit. 'was it ever heard') that a man bit a dog?' Compare the non-rhetorical question: *¿has estado alguna vez en Madrid?* 'have you ever been in Madrid?'

27.5.7 *Apenas* and other words meaning 'scarcely', 'hardly', 'as soon as'

Apenas may be a subordinator of time or an adverb. In the following examples it is a subordinator:

Apenas llegamos/habíamos llegado/hubimos llegado/cuando empezó a llover	We had scarcely arrived when it started raining
Apenas den con algún posible testigo, si es que dan, que nos avisen (LS, Sp., dialogue)	As soon as they find some possible witness, assuming they do, tell them to let us know
Apenas había dado treinta pasos la invadió el terror (ES, Mex.).	She had scarcely walked thirty paces when she was overcome by terror

In the following examples it is an adverb:

No te conozco apenas/Apenas (*si*) *te conozco*	I hardly know you
Hace apenas seis años	barely six years ago
Tu pensión apenas llega para cubrir gastos (APR, Sp., dialogue)	Your pension's barely enough to cover expenses
el entusiasmo apenas contenido de los profesores universitarios (RB, Ch.)	the barely repressed enthusiasm of the university teachers

(1) For the subjunctive with *apenas*, as in *tengo que estar alerta para abrirles la puerta apenas lleguen* (EP, Mex., dialogue) 'I've got to be alert so as to open the door for them as soon as they arrive'; see 20.4.7.

(2) When used as an adverb before a verb the variant *apenas si* is much used for the meanings 'only' and 'scarcely': Seco (1998, 51), says it is especially common in literary styles. *En una semana apenas si cambió dos palabras con su tío* (JMs, Sp.) 'In the course of a week she barely exchanged two words with her uncle', *yo apenas si gasto mis zapatos* (EP, Mex., dialogue) 'I scarcely/hardly/barely wear out my shoes'. *Apenas si* is not used when *apenas* is a subordinator as in *apenas llegué* 'I had scarcely arrived' or when *apenas* follows the verb, i.e. *hace apenas seis años* 'barely six years ago', not **hace apenas si seis años*.

(3) When *apenas* is a subordinator of time, *no bien* (or often *ni bien* in Latin America, especially the Southern Cone) is an alternative: *no bien algo me produce una tristeza infinita, me convierto en un hombre de izquierda* (ABE, Pe.) 'as soon as something produces an infinite sadness in me, I turn into a man of the Left' (i.e. politically), *se mostró encantado de ayudarme no bien llegara a su país* (JN, Sp.) 'he declared he would be delighted to help me as soon as he returned to his country', *ni bien terminó de envolver los regalos* (CP, Arg.) 'she had barely finished wrapping the presents . . .'

(4) *Nada más* is a colloquial alternative as a subordinator of time used in time statements in Spain but less so in Latin America, where *nomás* is often used: *nada más llegar, pasé por su despacho* 'as soon as I arrived, I dropped in at his office', *lo haré nada más llegues* 'I'll do it as soon as you arrive', *de no haber logrado salir del país nada más producirse el golpe* (JM, Sp.) 'had he not managed to leave the country as soon as the coup happened', but *el Coronel va a venir a despedirse nomás termine de cenar* (MS, Mex., dialogue) 'the Colonel is going to come and say goodbye as soon as he's finished having dinner'. See 27.6 for *nomás*.

27.5.8 *En mi vida, en toda la noche*

The phrases *en mi vida/en la vida*, 'in my life', *en toda la noche* 'in the whole night' can be used as negatives: *en mi vida lo/le he visto* (or *no lo/le he visto en mi vida*) 'I've never seen him in my life', *en toda la noche he podido dormir* 'I've not been able to sleep the whole night', *¿para qué quería identificación allá en la sierra? En su vida había tenido una* (EM, Mex.) 'what did he need and identity document for up there in the sierra? He'd never had one in his life' (it does not mean 'he had had one in his life').

Insertion of *no* does not change the meaning: *en mi vida no he visto nada tan peculiar* 'I've never seen anything so peculiar in my life'.

(1) *En toda la noche* without an accompanying negative word is rather old-fashioned: *no he podido dormir en toda la noche* is more normal.

27.5.9 *En absoluto*

Important: the negative meaning of *en absoluto* should be noted: —*¿Te molesta?* — *En absoluto* '"Does it bother you?" "Absolutely **not**/not at all"', *el acercamiento resultaba más difícil aún que si no nos conociésemos en absoluto* (JV, Mex.) 'getting close to one another was even more difficult than if we hadn't known one another at all'.

27.5.10 *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'. *Tampoco* is common on both continents:

—¿Tienes la llave? —No—. Yo tampoco . . .	'Do you have the key?' 'No.' 'Nor do I'
Tampoco pienso decir a qué me dedico (LS, Sp., dialogue)	Nor am I planning to say what I do for a living
Tampoco dice nada a nadie	Nor does (s)he say anything to anyone
Tampoco el cine mexicano lo entusiasmaba mucho (ES, Mex.)	He wasn't very keen on Mexican cinema either

(1) *Ni* or *y* can precede *tampoco*: *yo no soy un rebelde sin causa, ni tampoco un desenfrenado* (JA, Mex., dialogue) 'I'm no rebel without a cause, nor am I crazy/out of control'. As this example shows, *ni* can only be combined with *tampoco* if a negative statement precedes.

(2) *Tampoco* is much used colloquially, especially in in Spain, to reduce the importance of a preceding remark, usually a negative one: *—Estoy furioso—. Hombre, tampoco es para que te pongas así/ tampoco es para tanto* '"I'm furious." "Come on, there's no need to get like that/it's not such a big deal"', *—Me han dicho que no pagaban sus impuestos—. Sí, tampoco es gran cosa* '"They told me that they didn't pay their taxes." "Yes, but that's no big deal"'.

27.6 *Nomás* (occasionally written *no más*)

Throughout Latin America this word has a variety of meanings in colloquial language. It is not used in Spain:

—¿Dónde está el hospital? —En la esquina nomás (Spain *justo en la esquina*)	'Where's the hospital?' 'Right on the corner'
La vi ayer nomás (Spain *lo/le vi ayer mismo*)	I saw her only yesterday
Pase nomás (Spain *pase*, *pase*, etc.)	*Do* come in, please
nomás que venga . . . (Sp. *en cuanto venga*)	as soon as s(h)e arrives . . .
El gringo viejo se murió en México. Nomás porque cruzó la frontera (CF, Mex., Sp. *solo/sólo porque . . .*)	The old gringo died in Mexico. Just because he crossed the border
Una invitación del señor Presidente nomás no se rechaza (idem, dialogue)	You don't turn down an invitation from the President himself

(1) On both continents, *no . . . más que* means 'only' and must be distinguished from *no . . . más de* 'not more than'; see 6.5.

28 Questions and exclamations

The following words are discussed in this chapter:

- *¿cuál?* which?/what? (Section 28.3)
- *¿qué?* what? (Section 28.4)
- *¿quién?* who? (Section 28.5)
- *¿cuánto* and *cuán?* how many/much? (Section 28.6)
- *¿cómo?* how? (Section 28.7)
- *¿cuándo?* when? (Section 28.8)
- *¿dónde?* where? (Section 28.9)
- *¿para qué?* and *¿por qué?* why?/what for? (Section 28.10)

Mistakes often made by foreigners when asking questions or making exclamations are: confusion between *qué* and *cuál*, failure to write accents on question words, omission or wrong position of the upside-down question and exclamation marks, mistakes in the choice between *qué* and *lo que* in indirect questions (see Glossary for 'indirect question'). For the use of the Spanish signs ¿ and ¡ see 44.4.5.

(1) Important: foreign students sometimes wonder why the subjunctive is not used after question words like *qué*, *cómo*, *cuándo*, e.g. why does one not say **me preguntaron cuándo 'llegues'* 'they asked me when you're arriving', correctly *. . . cuándo llegas?* These accented forms are not subordinating conjunctions, so the subjunctive is not used after them: one says *no sé cuándo lloverá* 'I don't know when it'll rain', not **llueva*. For the subjunctive after the unaccented words *que*, *cuando*, *como*, etc. see 20.3 and 20.4.7. The exception to this is colloquial Spanish from Colombia northwards which tends to use subjunctives in indirect questions, e.g. *no sé cuándo lleguen* (standard Spanish . . . *cuándo llegan*) 'I don't know when they arrive', *¿quién sabe qué opinen otros lectores?* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'who knows what other readers think?' See 20.12.1.

(2) *¿Cúyo?* for *¿de quién?* 'whose?' is obsolete in modern Spanish but the form *cuyo* is used in relative clauses like *los alumnos cuyo apellido empieza con "B"* 'students whose family name begins with "B"'. See 39.7.

28.1 Spelling

Spanish question words are written with an accent: *ahora hay más muertos y ni siquiera hay acuerdo en torno a **cuántos** son y **cómo** murieron* (*La Reforma*, Mex.) 'now there are more dead and there is even no agreement about how many there are and how they died', *no sabemos ni **quién** es usted ni **cuál** es su juego* (LS, Ch., dialogue) 'we don't know who you are or what your game is'.

The accent shows that these words are stressed in speech, and this can radically alter the meaning of a sentence. Compare *yo sé que piensan* 'I know *that* they think' and *yo sé qué piensan* 'I know *what* they think', or *quien sabe francés . . .* 'the person who knows French . . .' and *¿quién sabe francés?* '*who* knows French?'

The accented words should be thought of as different words from the unstressed ones *que*, *como*, *cual*, *cuanto*, *cuando*, *quien*, which should be sought in the Index.

(1) Important: the accent is also used in exclamations: *¡qué inteligente eres!* 'aren't you intelligent!', *¡cuánta nieve!* 'what a lot of snow!', *¡cómo trabajan!* 'the way they work!'

28.2 Word order in questions and exclamations

When a sentence or clause begins with one of the words listed above, the order Verb-Subject is used (subject in bold):

*¿Qué hizo **usted**?*	What did you do?
*¿Cómo se llama **tu hermana**?*	What's your sister called?
*¿Cómo cena **la gente decente**?* (EM, Mex., dialogue)	How do decent people have dinner?
*¿A qué viene **la pregunta**?* (GGM, Col. dialogue)	What's the question for?
*¿Desde cuándo no fuma **tu marido**?*	Since when has your husband not smoked?
*¡Qué inteligentes son **las ardillas**!*	Aren't squirrels intelligent!

Word order in interrogative sentences is discussed more fully at 42.3.

(1) In Caribbean, especially Cuban, Spanish constructions like *¿qué usted hizo?* for *¿qué hizo usted?* are common. See 42.3.4.

28.3 *Cuál* and *cual*

28.3.1 Basic uses of *cuál*

This word is a pronoun whose basic meaning is 'which one?' of a set of things:

¿Cuál prefieres?	Which one do you prefer?
¿A cuál prefieres?	Which of the (people) do you prefer?
¿A cuál de los tres se refiere usted?	To which of the three are you referring?
Dime cuál debo elegir	Tell me which (one) I should choose
Cayó ahora en la cuenta de cuál era el verdadero sesgo de mi indiscreción posible (JM, Sp.)	He now realized what was the real intention of my possible indiscretion
Sería difícil decir cuál era la más arreglada de las tres mujeres allí presentes (MS, Mex.)	It would be hard to say which of the three women present there was the best dressed

(1) When persons are referred to, *quién* is preferred: *han venido algunos de tercero, pero no sé quiénes* (rather than *cuáles*) 'some of the third year (students) have come, but I don't know which/who'.

(2) *Cual* (no accent) is an archaic alternative for *como* 'like', sporadically revived on both continents for literary effect: *se mantiene a su lado cual guardaespaldas* (EP, Mex.) 'he stays at her side like a bodyguard', *me miraba cual testigo de Jehová llamando al timbre* (APR, Sp.) 'he was looking at me like a Jehovah's Witness ringing the doorbell'.

(3) *Cual si* is archaic for *como si*: *arrimada a las paredes cual si la atosigara el miedo* (ET, Sp.) 'clinging to the walls, as if fear were harrying her', *uno espera ese vistazo cual si fuera una maravilla* (MB, Ur.) 'one awaits that spectacle as though it were a miracle'. *Como si* could have been used in these examples. Both expressions require a subjunctive.

(4) *Cual* without an accent appears most often in the relative pronoun *el cual*, discussed at 39.3–5. It is also found in the phrase *tal o cual* 'this or that' or 'such and such', as in *e insistía en que tal o cual problema tenía otra solución* (EP, Mex.) 'and he insisted that this or that problem had another solution'.

28.3.2 Translating 'what is/are/were?', etc.

The usual translations of the phrase 'what is?' is *¿cuál es?*: *¿cuál es/era el motivo/la diferencia?* 'what is/was the motive/difference' (cf. *¿qué motivo/diferencia hay/había?* 'what motive/difference is/was there?'). *¿Qué es?* literally means 'what *thing*?' or 'what kind of thing?', and it is used to ask the definition of something's nature, as in *¿qué es la democracia/un agujero negro?* 'what (kind of thing) is democracy/a black hole?' Compare:

¿Qué es la vida?	What is life?
¿Qué hora es?	What's the time?
¿Qué es su hermana?	What is his/her sister? (i.e. what does she do?)

and

¿Cuál es el problema?	What's the problem?
¿Cuál es su impresión de los acontecimientos?	What is your impression of the events?
Ya sabemos cuál es la respuesta que cualquier escritor hubiera dado a la carta de la señora (JC, Sp.)	We already know what answer any writer would have given to the lady's letter
¿Cuál no sería mi sorpresa?	Imagine my surprise . . .
Pero ya que usted me pregunta cuáles son mis planes para el futuro (ES, Mex., dialogue)	But since you're asking me what my plans for the future are . . .

(1) One says *¿a qué fecha estamos?*/*¿a cuántos estamos?* for 'what's the date today?' or *¿qué fecha es hoy?* Compare *¿cuál es la fecha de la Batalla de Waterloo?* 'what's the date of the Battle of Waterloo?'

28.3.3 *Cuál*: dialect differences

In Spain and in some parts of Latin America, *cuál* is almost never used adjectivally (i.e. directly before a noun): one says *¿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 from Colombia northwards, and the *NGLE* 22.14a says that this may be spreading in the Americas:

¿Gatos? ¿Cuáles gatos? (CF, Mex., dialogue. Sp. *¿qué gatos?*)	Cats? What cats?
—¿Recibiste mi carta? —¿Cuál carta? (JP, Mex., dialogue. Sp. *¿qué carta?*)	'Did you get my letter?' 'What letter?'
—Me dijo que eran las mentiras las que la volvían loca—, ¿Cuáles mentiras? (LR, Col., Sp. *¿qué mentiras?*)	'She told me it was the lies that were driving her crazy.' 'What lies?'

(1) Sentences like *¿cuál sombrero prefieres?* may occasionally be heard in Spain, but learners of European Spanish should say *¿qué sombrero prefieres?*, *¿cuál* ***de*** *los sombreros prefieres?*, or simply *¿cuál prefieres?*

28.4 *Qué*

For the conjunction *que* as in *dice que viene* '(s)he says (s)he's coming' see 37.4. For the relative pronoun *que* (as in *el libro que estoy leyendo* 'the book I'm reading', see Chapter 39.

28.4.1 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 28.3.2. It is also used in exclamations like *¡qué inteligente es!* 'isn't (s)he intelligent!' See 28.4.4.

(**a**) ***Qué* as a pronoun**

No sé qué decirte	I don't know what to say to you
Discutían sobre qué iban a decirles	They were arguing about what to tell them
No recuerdo ya qué fue de Antonio	I can't remember what became of Antonio
¿Quién ha dicho qué?	Who said what?
¿Y qué . . .?	So what?
Nunca voy a tener con qué pagarte (AM, Mex., dialogue)	I'll never have enough to pay you with

(**b**) ***Qué* as an adjective** (see 28.3.3 for the Latin-American use of *cuál* in this context):

¿A qué párrafo te refieres?	Which paragraph are you referring to?
¿Qué animales prefieren fotografiar?	What animals do they/you prefer to photograph?
Entender qué casa quiere comprar un cliente ahorra tiempo y malos entendidos (CP, Arg.)	Understanding what house a client wants to buy saves time and misunderstandings
No sabía qué sentido tenía esa supervivencia (SP, Sp.)	I didn't know what meaning that survival could have

(c) Adverbially to reinforce adjectives or adverbs:

¡Qué generoso es!	Isn't he generous!
¡Qué tarde se ha hecho!	Look how late it is!/Gosh, it's late!
¡Qué bien cantan!	They really sing well!
Boston, ¡qué bella ciudad de tabiques rojos! (EP, Mex., dialogue. *Tabiques = ladrillos* in Spain)	Boston, what a beautiful red brick city!

(1) Before a verb phrase *qué* may optionally be followed by *que* in colloquial language: *¡qué guapa* (*que*) *es tu hermana!* 'isn't your sister good-looking!', *¡qué bien* (*que*) *lo han hecho!* 'they've really done it well!'

(2) Use of *cómo* before adjectives is found in Latin America but is archaic in Spain: *¡cómo somos desgraciadas las mujeres!* (Sp. *¡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), *cómo es díscola alguna gente* 'how unruly some people are' (AM, Mex., dialogue). J.M. Lope Blanch (1991), 13, notes that *cómo* is used thus by all social classes in Mexico. Alternative constructions, found on both continents, are *qué díscola es* . . . and *cómo es de díscola* . . .

(3) *¿Qué?* is a familiar alternative for the more courteous *¿cómo?/¿cómo dices?* when a repetition is requested: *—María es muy respondona—. ¿Qué?* (polite *¿cómo?*, Mex. *mande*) '"María answers back a lot." "What?/Pardon?"' (i.e. 'what did you say?').

(4) **Important**: *qué* 'what?' must not be confused with the conjunction *que* found in sentences like *¡que me llamen a las cinco!* 'let them call me at five o'clock!'/'tell them to call me at five!', *dijiste que te ibas* 'you said you were leaving', *¡pero que no nos hayas dicho nada!* 'but the fact that you didn't tell us anything!' See 20.3.19.

28.4.2 *Qué* and *lo que* in indirect questions

Either *qué* or *lo que* are possible in indirect questions (see Glossary), except immediately before an infinitive, when *qué* is required and *lo que* may sound uneducated:

Sé de lo que te hablo (CF, Mex., dialogue; or *de qué te hablo*)	I know what I'm talking to you about
Ni sé qué piensa y tampoco sé lo que pienso yo (ES, Arg., dialogue)	I don't know what he thinks, and I don't know what I think either
¡Sabe Dios en qué nos metemos!	God knows what we're getting into!
No sé lo que/qué voy a hacer	I don't know what I'm going to do
No sé qué hacer (not **no sé lo que hacer*)	I don't know what to do

28.4.3 *Qué*: some idiomatic uses

¿Qué tal estás? (= *¿cómo estás?*)	How are you? How are things?
¿Qué tal es como profesor?	What's he like as a teacher?
¿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?/¿Y qué?	What do I care?/So what?
¿A qué viene esta compra? (JA, Sp., dialogue)	What's the point of this purchase?/ What's the point of buying this?
¿De qué va la cosa?	What's it all about?
¿Y qué de las familias sin hogar?	And what about the homeless families?

(1) *Que* has no accent in the following construction: *—¡A que llueve esta tarde! —¡A que no!* '"I bet you it rains this afternoon!" "I bet it doesn't!"'

28.4.4 Translating 'What a . . .!'

Qué is used before noun phrases without *un/una* to translate 'what a . . .!' in exclamations:

¡Qué vida!	What a life!
¡Qué día más/tan hermoso!	What a lovely day!
¡Qué cara! (Spain, familiarly, *¡qué morro!*)	What a nerve/cheek!
¡Los grandes tazones de café con leche, ¡qué maravilla! (EP, Mex.)	The big cups of white coffee: wonderful!
¡Qué libro más/tan interesante!	What an interesting book!
¡Qué nevera más/tan estúpida esta/ésta!	Wow, is this is refrigerator stupid!!
Ronie fue directo al bar. "Qué raro tan temprano" (CP, Arg., dialogue)	Ronie went straight to the bar. 'That's strange, [drinking] so early'

(1) The colloquial *cómo . . . de* is common with *estar* on both continents: *¡cómo estás de guapa!* 'aren't you looking attractive!', *pero ¡cómo está de gordo!* 'wow, isn't he fat!'

(2) *Qué de . . .* is a rather old-fashioned alternative for *cuánto* in exclamations: *¡qué de cosas/cuántas cosas tengo que contarte!* (familiarly *¡la de cosas que tengo que contarte!*) 'what a lot of things I've got to tell you!'

(3) For the Latin-American phrase *qué tan . . .* see 10.16 note 6.

28.5 *Quién*

Quién/quiénes translates 'who?'/'whom?' in direct and indirect questions:

¿Quién ha sido?	Who was it?
¿Quién iba a pensar que era médico?	Who would have thought he was a doctor?
¿Sabes en quién estoy pensando ahora?	Do you know who(m) I'm thinking of now?
¿A quién invitaste?	Whom did you invite?
No sabe a quién querer más, si al papá o a la mamá (ES, Mex., dialogue)	He doesn't know who to love more, father or mother

(1) For *quien* as a relative pronoun as in *los amigos con quienes había salido* 'the friends (s)he had gone out with' see Chapter 39. For *quien* as a nominalizer (as in *quien dice eso . . .* 'people who say that . . .'/'the person who says that . . .') see Chapter 40.

(2) *Quién* plus the imperfect subjunctive translates 'if only . . .': *quién fuera millonario . . .* 'if only I were a millionaire'. See 20.2.5.

(3) The following construction is common: *yo no soy quién para aconsejar* (ABV, Sp., dialogue), 'I'm not the right person to give advice', *tú no eres quién para criticar* 'you're no one to criticize'/'you've got no right to criticize', *yo no soy quién para emitir juicios de valor* (interview in *El Independiente*, Mex.) 'I'm not the person to make value judgements'. There is some uncertainty about whether *quién* in this construction should have an accent: it usually does.

(4) The *NGLE* 22.13b notes the use of *quién* in the meaning of 'no one' in Mexico and Central America: *la muerte de su marido la había dejado sin quién en el mundo* 'the death of her husband has left her with no one in the world', in Spain *sin nadie en el mundo . . ..*

28.6 *Cuánto* and *cuán*

28.6.1 *Cuánto*

Cuánto may function as a pronoun, adjective or as an adverb. In the former two cases it agrees in number and gender with the noun; in the latter case it is invariable.

(**a**) **'How much?', 'how many?'**

¿Cuánto es?	How much is it?
¿Cuánta mantequilla queda?	How much butter is left?
No sé cuántos vendieron	I don't know how many they sold
—¿Cuánto tarda en llegar?, pregunta—. —Quince días a lo más (DT, Mex., dialogue. Sp. . . . *días como máximo*)	'How long will it take you to get there?' he asks. 'Fifteen days at most.'

(**b**) **In exclamations, 'how much!', 'what a lot!'**

¡Cuántas veces (*no*) *te lo habré dicho!*	How many times have I told you!
¡Mira cuánta nieve!	Look at all that snow!
¡Cuántas medidas drásticas e innecesarias, suspiró el Director General! (CF, Mex.)	'What a lot of drastic and unnecessary measures!' the Director General sighed
¡Cuánto más trágico!	How much more tragic!
¡Cuánto mejor estarías así!	How much better you'd look like that!

(1) In the comparative phrases *cuanto más/menos . . . más/menos* 'the more . . . the more' 'the less . . . the less', *cuanto* is not used exclamatorily, is not stressed, and does not take an accent. See 6.11 for further discussion of this construction.

(2) *Cuanto* (no accent) may be used as a relative pronoun equivalent to *todo lo que*: *tengo cuanto necesito* (ABV, Sp., dialogue) = *tengo todo lo que necesito* 'I have all I need', [*la recámara*] *fue sin duda la más suntuosa de cuantas ocupó* (ES, Mex. *Recámara = la habitación* in Spain) 'without a doubt, the room was the most luxurious of all those she had occupied'.

(3) Exclamatory *cuánto* may optionally be followed by *que* before verbs: *¡cuánto* (*que*) *te he extrañado!* 'I've missed you so much!' (example from *GDLE* 31.3.12).

28.6.2 *Cuán*

In exclamations and indirect questions *cuánto* is shortened to *cuán* and *cuanto* to *cuan* before adverbs or adjectives other than *más*, *menos*, *mayor*, *menor*, *mejor*, *peor*. However, although it is not yet completely extinct in educated speech, *cuán* is nowadays usually found only in flowery styles, and *qué*, or *lo* + adjective or adverb (the latter discussed at 8.2.2) are more usual. *Cuán* is apparently more common in Latin America than in Spain:

Ella misma se sorprendió de cuán lejos estaba de su vida (GGM, Col. or *. . . de lo lejos que estaba de su vida*)	She herself was surprised at how distant he was from her life
Sólo han conseguido exponer cuán soeces, cuán ineptos y cuán interesados son nuestros dirigentes políticos (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	They have merely managed to expose how coarse, inept and self-interested our political leaders are
Luego se echó en el suelo con naturalidad cuan largo era (JM, Sp.)	Then he casually lay down full length on the floor
No aguanta el sueño y el cansancio. Se tira en el suelo cuan largo es (*CREA*, Mex.)	He can't stand the sleepiness and tiredness. He lies/US lays down full length on the floor

(1) *Cuán* in questions like *¿cuán apoyado te sientes por tu familia?* 'how supported do you feel/to what extent do you feel supported by your family?' is heard in Latin America outside the River Plate region, but it is archaic elsewhere. Usually one says *¿hasta qué punto te sientes apoyado?*

(2) In Spain and the Southern Cone sentences like 'how' + adjective + 'is/was it?' are translated *¿cómo es de . . .? ¿cómo es de grande el hotel?* 'how big is the hotel?', *¿cómo es de profunda el agua?* 'how deep is the water?', *¿cómo era de alto?* 'how tall is he?' For the Latin-American *qué tan* as in *¿qué tan grande es?* 'how big is it?' see 28.7 note 4.

28.7 *Cómo*

'How' in direct and indirect questions and in exclamations. Sometimes it means 'why?', and in this case it is more formal than the English 'how come?' (for *como* = 'as', 'since', see 37.5.2; for *como* + subjunctive = 'if' see 29.8.2):

¿Cómo te llamas?	What's your name?
¿Cómo quieres que me peine?	How do you want me to do my hair?
No sé cómo hacerlo	I don't know how to do it
¡Cómo llueve!	Look how it's raining!
¿Cómo/Por qué no me llamaste ayer?	Why didn't you call me yesterday?
Pero ¿cómo vas a vender dulces en un cine? (EP, Mex., dialogue, Sp. *caramelos*)	But how are you going to sell sweets/candy in a cinema?
¿Cómo es de inteligente tu cuñado? (Mex., Col. *¿Qué tan inteligente es . . .*?)	How intelligent is your brother-in-law?

(1) *¿Cómo?* or *¿cómo dice* (*usted*)*?* (Mexicans say *mande*) are polite ways of requesting a repetition of something misheard or misunderstood (politer than *¿qué?* 'what?').

(2) *¿Qué tal?* is common on both continents as a way of saying 'how?' or 'what's sort of?': *¿qué tal estás?* 'how are you?', *¿qué tal es como médico?* 'what's he like as a doctor?'

(3) *Cómo no* is much used in Latin America and occasionally in Spain to mean 'of course (not)' in reply to questions, as in *—¿Le importa si me voy temprano? —¡Cómo no!* 'Do you mind if I leave early?' 'Of course not'.

(4) *Qué tan* is much used in Latin America outside the Southern Cone, and especially in Mexico, in writing and in speech, in sentences like the following: *le preguntó . . . qué tan bueno era para disparar un arma* (MBD, Col.) 'he asked him how good he was at firing a gun', *¿qué tan rápido se pueden multiplicar las ratas?* (*Excélsior*, Mex.) 'how fast can rats breed?', *vaya a saber qué tan bueno fue en realidad* (LR, Col., dialogue) 'who knows how good (i.e. 'saintly') he really was'.

28.8 *Cuándo* 'when'

Little need be said about this word in direct questions, e.g. *¿cuándo fue eso?* 'when was that?', *¿desde cuándo te gusta el tequila?* 'since when did you like tequila?', and in indirect questions: *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 39.12); or it may be a subordinator, often requiring the subjunctive (see 20.4.7). For 'whenever' see 20.5.6. For the use of *cuando* in cleft sentences, e.g. *fue entonces cuando . . .* 'it was then that . . .' see 41.3.

(1) It may also occasionally be used as a preposition meaning 'at the time of': *nos casamos cuando el terremoto* 'we got married at the time of the earthquake'.

28.9 *Dónde* 'where'

This word behaves predictably in direct questions, e.g. *¿dónde viven?* 'where do they live?' and in indirect questions: *no sé dónde viven* 'I don't know where they live', *no sabe por dónde empezar* (AC, Mex.) 'she doesn't know where to start'.

Dónde should be differentiated from *¿adónde?*, which means 'where to?' and is optionally used with verbs of motion: *¿adónde/dónde van ustedes?* 'where are you going?' Only *¿dónde?* can be used when no motion is involved: *¿dónde estamos?*, not *¿adónde estamos?*

(1) When it is not a question word, *donde* (no accent) may introduce relative clauses (see 39.10), where the difference between *donde*, *adonde* and *a donde* is discussed. For 'wherever' see 20.5.8. For *donde* in cleft sentences, e.g. *fue allí donde . . .* 'it was there that . . .' see 41.3.

(2) *Donde* may also mean 'at the house of' in some countries, especially Chile, Peru, Ecuador and Central America: *voy donde Olga = voy a casa de Olga*—this construction is also heard in colloquial speech in Spain. *Lo de* can also mean 'the house of' in the River Plate area: *Isabel estuvo unos días en lo de Farías* (MSQ, Arg.) 'Isabel spent as few days at Farías's house'.

28.10 *Por qué, para qué*

Por qué 'why' (stressed *qué*) 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* emphasizes intention, *por qué* emphasizes cause, and the difference is the same as between 'what *for*?' and 'why?': *¿para qué* (or *¿por qué*) *vamos a cambiarlo si todo está bien?* 'what are we changing it for if everything's OK?', *una de tantas comisiones creadas entonces sin que nadie sepa muy bien para qué sirven* (JV, Mex., dialogue; not *por qué*) 'one of so many official committees created at that time without anyone knowing very well what they are for'.

Statistically *por qué* is much more frequent and can often be used instead of *para qué*, but obviously not in sentences like *¿por qué se incendió la casa?* 'why did the house catch fire?' (not *para qué* 'what for?').

29 Conditional sentences

This chapter discusses

- Different types of conditional sentences (Sections 29.1–7)
- The use of the imperfect indicative for the conditional tense (Section 29.5)
- The uses of *si* (= 'if') (Section 29.8)
- *Como* + subjunctive instead of *si* (Section 29.8.2)
- *De* + infinitive instead of *si* (Section 29.8.3)
- Other ways of expressing conditions (Section 29.9)
- Translating 'if I were you . . .' (Section 29.10)

29.1 Conditional sentences with *si* 'if'

For more on the word *si* 'if' see 29.8.1.

The commonest types of conditional sentences that use *si* are:

(**a**) **Open conditions** (Section 29.2)

Si viene me quedo/quedaré	If (s)he comes I'll stay
Si han llegado, me quedaré	If they have arrived, I'll stay
Lleva cinco semanas en cama. Si eso no es grave, ya me dirás	(S)He's been in bed for five weeks. If that's not serious, tell me what is
Si el televisor funcionaba, lo comprarían (see 29.2 note 1)	If the television set worked, they'd buy it

(**b**) **Remote conditions** (Section 29.3)

Si yo tuviera/tuviese cien dólares, lo compraría	If I had $100 I'd buy it
Si yo fuera/fuese millonario te compraría un yate	If I were a millionaire I'd buy you a yacht

(**c**) **Unfulfilled conditions** (Section 29.4)

Si yo hubiera/hubiese tenido cien mil dólares, lo habría comprado	If I'd had $100,000 I would have bought it

(**d**) **Fulfilled conditions** (Section 29.7)

Si no salía, era porque prefería quedarse en casa	If (s)he didn't go out, it was because (s)he preferred staying at home
Si llegaba temprano comíamos a las doce	If (s)he arrived early we had lunch at twelve

(1) Important: *si*, in the meaning of 'if', is not followed by the present subjunctive. See 29.8.1 for details and exceptions.

(2) Important: the *-ra* form and *-se* form of the imperfect subjunctive are interchangeable in conditional sentences, the *-ra* form being more common. See 20.1.3.

29.2 Open conditions

So called because fulfilment (US 'fulfillment') or non-fulfilment of the condition is equally possible. The subjunctive is not used in open conditions and the tense patterns are 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 isn't worth it
Si (*el elitismo*) *significa que selecciona a sus miembros en razón de su aptitud, todas las universidades del mundo son elitistas* (MVLl, Pe.)	If elitism means they select their members according to their ability, every university in the world is elitist

(**b**) *Si* + present + future, or present with future meaning

Si el contrato no está mañana en Londres, no hay/habrá trato	If the contract isn't in London by tomorrow, there will be no deal
Si llueve me quedo/quedaré en casa	If it rains I'll stay at home
Si lo veo por la calle, lo voy a reconocer (RC, Sp., dialogue)	If I see him in the street, I'll recognize him
Si te oye tu papi se muere (AM, Mex. dialogue)	If your dad hears you he'll die

(**c**) *Si* + past tense + present, future or conditional, 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.

Si han contestado ya, no les escribiré	If they've already answered, I won't write to them
Avisó que la huelga sería legal, pero si encontraban obstáculos entonces "sería revolucionaria" (JA, Mex.)	He warned that the strike would be legal, but if they ran into obstacles 'it would be revolutionary'
Si no lo hicieron estamos salvados	If they didn't do it, we're saved

(**d**) *Si* + present + imperative

Si queréis ver el desfile salid al balcón (Lat. Am. *si quieren . . . salgan . . .*)	If you want to see the parade go out on to the balcony
Si lo compras en DVD, que sea en Blu-ray (*DVD* pronounced [dew-βe-ðé])	If you buy it on DVD, make sure it's Blu-Ray

(e) A past tense + the conditional or an indicative past tense (see note 1)

La operarían si tenía algún hueso roto	They would operate on her if she had any broken bones
(*Dije que*) *me quedaba en casa si llovía*	(I said) I'd stay at home if it rained

(1) Important: open conditions in the past are typical of reported speech: *me dijo que me pagaría/pagaba si había terminado* '(s)he told me he'd pay me if I'd finished'. This reports the actual words *te pago si has terminado* 'I'll pay you if you've finished'. Likewise *le respondió que no se acabaría nunca si se ponían a leer todas las actas de las casillas* (JA, Mex). In this context in Spain *actas* = *papeletas* and *casillas* = *urnas*) 'he replied that they'd never finish if they decided to read every voting paper in the ballot boxes'. This construction is very common when the text reports someone's spoken or unspoken thoughts:

Si la policía la detenía, ya escarmentaría (MVM, Sp., unspoken thoughts)	If the police arrested her, that would teach her a lesson

Si no actuaba pronto, Gianni terminaría por resquebrajarse (SP, Mex.)	If she didn't act promptly Gianni would eventually break down
¿En qué se convertiría su vida si estallaba el escándalo? (MVLl, Pe.)	What would become of his life if the scandal got out?
Me pareció que si me mostraba disponible te ibas a cansar (MP, Arg., dialogue)	I thought that if I showed I was available you'd get tired (of me)

This construction often encourages students to think that the pattern *si* + imperfect indicative + conditional is the usual way of making *remote* conditions in Spanish, as it is in French and English, e.g. 'if I **had** money **I'd** buy a car'/*si j'**avais** de l'argent j'**achèterais** une voiture.* The next section should correct this assumption.

29.3 **Remote conditions**

There are two types, which correspond to the English sentences 'if you left now you'd get there early' and 'if I were rich I'd buy you a house'.

The first type is theoretically fulfillable and is merely a less confident variant of an open condition: there is little difference between *si pagaras/pagases 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'. In the second type, the condition is contrary to fact and the subjunctive construction is the only possible one: *si yo fuera/fuese rico, te compraría una casa*, 'if I were/was rich, I'd buy you a house (but I'm not)'. In 'remote' conditions, the verb in the if-clause is in the imperfect subjunctive (*-ra* or *-se* form). The verb in the other clause is usually in the conditional.

Me he pasado la vida burlándome de los psicoanalistas y sus fantasmagorías pseudocientíficas, pero mentiría si dijera que aquellas sesiones no sirvieron para nada (JC, Sp.)	I've spent my life mocking psychoanalysts and their pseudo-scientific fantasies, but I'd be lying if I said that those sessions were no use at all
Si supieras hacer el nudo como todos los chicos de tu edad, no te tendrías que quejar (IA, Sp., dialogue)	If you knew how to make a knot like all the boys of your age, you wouldn't have to complain
Si no fuera por los embotellamientos de tránsito sería la más feliz de las mujeres (ES, Mex., dialogue)	If it weren't for the traffic jams I'd be the happiest of women
Quería saber qué haría si fuese el presidente de la atribulada red social Twitter (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	She wanted to know what he would do were he the president of the troubled Twitter social network

(1) In these four examples the *-se* or *-ra* subjunctive form could have been used in the if-clause.

(2) As was mentioned at 29.2 note 1, English and French-speaking students must avoid using the imperfect indicative in the if-clause of remote conditions (cf. *si j'**étais** riche . . .*).

(3) Use of the conditional in the if-clause is regional or sub-standard, but it is common in Navarre, the Basque Provinces, near-by parts of Spain, and in popular Argentine speech, e.g. ?*si no estaría preso, no lo habrían soltado* 'if he wasn't arrested they wouldn't have let him go' (MP, Arg., dialogue; for *estuviera/estuviese*). This should not be imitated.

29.4 Unfulfilled conditions

These indicate a condition in the past that was not fulfilled as in *si me hubieran/hubiesen invitado habría ido* 'if they had invited me I'd have gone' (but they didn't). 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 (*habría/hubiera hecho*, etc.):

Si él hubiera/hubiese tenido dinero, habría/hubiera saldado la cuenta	If (s)he'd had money (s)he'd have settled the bill
Si no hubiera sido por las contracciones del estómago, se habría sentido muy bien (JC, Arg., dialogue)	If it hadn't been for the stomach cramps, he'd have felt fine
Mi mamá trajo luto un año y lo habría llevado más tiempo si no le hubiéramos dicho que a papá no debía gustarle (ES, Mex., dialogue)	My mother wore widow's black for a year and would have worn it longer if we hadn't told her that father surely didn't like it

(1) A number of simpler ways of making unfulfilled conditions are heard in spontaneous speech but they are rare in writing and are probably a shade too informal for most foreign learners: *si me hubieran/hubiesen pagado más claro que trabajaba más* 'if they'd paid me more of course I'd have worked harder', *si lo llego a saber, te habría llamado* 'If I'd known I'd have called you', *si llegas a estar más rato, te juro que entro a cobrarles algo . . .* (CMG, Sp., dialogue) 'if you'd stayed there any longer, I swear I'd have gone in and charged them some money . . .', *si sé que estás enfermo, no vengo* 'if I'd known you were ill/sick, I wouldn't have come', *di un tropezón y si me descuido, me caigo* 'I slipped and I nearly fell over', *si me largo en ese momento, hubiera sido una malagradecida* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'if I'd left at that moment I'd have been ungrateful', *si no te hubieras casado conmigo, me meto de monja* (present indicative for *me hubiera metido de . . .*) 'if you hadn't married me I'd have become a nun'.

(2) *Si* + imperfect + imperfect is widespread but defined as 'sub-standard' by the *GDLE* 57.2.3.3: *si me tocabas, te mataba con mi cuchillo* (ES, Arg., dialogue) 'if you'd touched me, I'd have killed you with my knife'. One also hears *si* + imperfect + conditional in Argentina: *si hace unos años yo veía* (for *hubiera/hubiese visto*) *en la playa a alguien con esto, hubiera pensado: ese tipo es loco* (Mafalda cartoon, Arg., Sp. *está loco*) 'if I'd seen someone wearing that on the beach a few years ago, I'd have thought the guy's crazy'.

(3) The following two types of unfulfilled condition should be noted: *si hubieras/hubieses trabajado más durante el año no* ***tendrías*** *que ir a clase ahora* 'if you had worked harder during the year you wouldn't have to go to classes now' (refers to the present) and *si hubieras/hubieses trabajado más durante el año no* ***habrías tenido*** *que ir a clase este verano* 'if you'd worked harder during the year, you wouldn't have had to go to classes this summer' (refers to the past).

29.5 Imperfect indicative for the conditional tense

The imperfect indicative is frequently used in conditional sentences instead of the conditional tense in spontaneous speech on both sides of the Atlantic (the subject is further discussed at 17.5.4). This is acceptable in relaxed Spanish but it is avoided in formal styles:

Desde luego, si yo fuera hombre, no me casaba (LG, Sp., dialogue)	Of course, if I were a man I wouldn't get married . . .
Si no fuera por vosotros iba yo a aguantar a vuestro padre . . . (CRG, Sp.)	If it weren't for you, would I put up with your father?

Ni loca me casaba con un español (ES, Mex., dialogue) — I wouldn't marry a Spanish man even if I were crazy

29.6 *-ra* forms instead of the conditional

See 17.5.7 for the use of the *-ra* pluperfect subjunctive form of *haber* (but not, at least in careful language, the *-se* form) as an alternative for the past conditional *habría*, e.g. *con él o sin él, habría/hubiera sido igual* 'with him or without him, it would have been the same'.

29.7 Fulfilled conditions

These are not really conditions at all but merely an elegant way of saying 'the reason why'/'just because'/'whenever'/'whereas'. The main verbs in the if-clause and the apodosis (the clause indicating the consequence of the condition) are in the indicative form:

Si me estaba contando todos aquellos proyectos era porque inexorablemente pensaba realizarlos (FU, Sp.) — If he was telling me about all those plans it was because he was inevitably intending to carry them out

Si he tenido suerte, la culpa no es mía — It's not my fault if I've been lucky

Si teníamos dinero, íbamos al teatro — If (i.e. 'whenever') we had any money we used to go to the theatre

Si te traje a la playa es para que vigilaras a Alvarito y no para que te pusieras a leer (SV, Ch., dialogue: i.e. 'the reason why I brought you . . .') — If I brought you to the beach it's so you could keep an eye on little Alvaro, not so you could start reading

Si en el siglo XX la guerra fue por el petróleo, en el actual será por el agua (*La Jornada*, Mex.) — If (i.e. 'whereas') war in the 20th century was about oil, in the present century it will be about water

29.8 *Si* 'if'

29.8.1 *Si*: general

Si is not followed by the present subjunctive, except occasionally after *saber*: *no sé si* ***sea*** *cierto* 'I do not know whether it be true' for *no sé si es cierto.* The latter construction is very common in many Latin-American republics, especially Mexico: *no sé si en este estado pued****a*** *continuar* (LRS, PR, dialogue) 'I don't know if I can go on in this condition', *a estas alturas ya no sé si eso sea posible* (DT, Mex., dialogue) 'having got this far I don't know any more if that's possible'. See 20.12.1 note 1 for details.

(1) Important: *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/fuera/fuese necesario*.

(2) Important: *si* cannot be followed by the future indicative except in the contexts described in note 3: **si vendrás mañana* is incorrect for *si vienes mañana* 'if you come tomorrow'.

(3) *Si* often means 'whether': *no sé si vienen/vendrán o no* 'I don't know whether/if they're coming or not'. In this case use of a future tense after *si* is possible.

(4) *Si* sometimes merely has an emphatic meaning: *pero ¡si tiene más de setenta años!* 'but (s)he's more than seventy years old!': see 35.4.8.

(5) In the phrase *apenas si* it has no function: *apenas* (*si*) *la conocía* 'I/he/she/you barely knew her'. See 27.5.7 note 2.

(6) The construction *que si . . .* indicates tedious repetition: *no sé por qué no vino Andrés. Que si no sabía a qué hora era, que si no lo/le habían invitado, que si su mujer estaba enferma . . .* 'I don't know why Andrés didn't come. He "didn't know" what time it was, they "didn't invite him", his wife was "sick . . ."' (i.e. you don't believe his various excuses).

29.8.2 *Como* = *si* 'if'

In informal language in type 1 (open) conditions, *como* with the present or imperfect subjunctive may be used instead of *si*. This tends to be confined to threats and warnings and is found on both continents as the Cuban example shows; but Lope Blanch (1991, 146), says that the construction is unknown in Mexican Spanish:

¡Como se me vuelva a colgar la tableta la tiro por la ventana!	If my tablet crashes again I'll throw it out of the window!
Me dijo que como no se lo pagara/pagase, se lo llevaba/llevaría	(S)he told me that if I didn't pay her/him, for it, (s)he would take it away
—¿Está enfermo su hijo? —Enferma me pondrá a mí como lo deje (AA, Cu., dialogue)	'Is your son sick?' 'He'll make *me* sick if I let him'

(1) *Como* with the indicative means 'since' (i.e. 'because') and is discussed at 37.5.2, e.g. *como no me lo has pagado, me lo llevo* 'since you've not paid me for it, I'm taking it away'.

(2) *Como* with the subjunctive can also mean 'except' or 'unless': *no tenemos nada que decir, como no sea que sentimos mucho lo de mi ahijada* (MS, Mex., dialogue) 'we have nothing to say except that we're very sorry for what happened to my goddaughter', *nunca he sabido para qué sirve tener dos como no sea para lavarse simultáneamente una mano en cada uno* (LR, Col., dialogue) 'I've never known what's the point of having two [washbasins] unless it's for simultaneously washing one hand in each of them'.

29.8.3 *De* + infinitive = *si* + finite verb

De plus an infinitive may be used for *si* and a finite verb in an if-clause. This construction is best restricted to sentences in which the verb in the if-clause and the verb in the subordinate clause are in the same person. One can say *de llover, lloverá mucho* 'if it rains it'll rain a lot' (both third-person), but not **de llover, me quedo en casa* 'if it rains I'm staying at home' (*si llueve me quedo/quedaré en casa*). This rule is not always applied, but foreigners should probably observe it:

Se me ocurrió que, de estar viva, la mujer me habría parecido más vieja y más digna (AM, Sp., dialogue)	It occurred to me that, had she been alive, the woman would have seemed older and more dignified to me
Un experimento . . . que, de confirmarse, supondría el hallazgo de la fuente de energía más buscada por los científicos (*Granma*, Cu.)	An experiment which, if confirmed, would mean the discovery of the energy source most sought after by scientists
De haber sido hija única a lo mejor sí me hubiera vuelto una niña mimada (ES, Mex., dialogue)	If I'd been an only child maybe I really would have become a spoilt girl

(1) When used thus *de* must have an unfulfilled or future meaning. One can say *de llover, lloverá mucho* 'if it rains it'll rain a lot', or *de haberlo sabido, habríamos . . .* 'had we known, we would

have . . .' (unfulfilled), but not **de ser guapa, es mi novia* 'if she's beautiful, she's my girlfriend' (timeless statement: *si es guapa . . .*). *De* cannot therefore be used in type 4 (fulfilled) conditional sentences (29.7).

29.9 Other ways of expressing conditions

(**a**) The gerund may sometimes have a conditional meaning: *hablando de esa manera no consigues nada* 'you'll get nowhere by talking like that' is the same as *si hablas de esa manera . . .* 'if you talk like that'. See 24.4.2 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 20.4.8b), *como no sea que* (see 29.8.2 note 2): *debe* (*de*) *estar en casa, a no ser que/a menos/como no sea que haya ido al bar con sus amigos* '(s)he must be at home, unless (s)he's gone to the bar with his/her friends'. The subjunctive is required after these expressions.

(**c**) 'If' may be expressed by some phrase meaning 'on condition that', e.g. *con tal* (*de*) *que, a condición de que* (see 20.4.8a): *compraré los aguacates, con tal* (*de*) *que estén frescos* 'I'll buy the avocados provided/if they're fresh'. (*Aguacate* is used in Spain and from Ecuador northwards; *la palta* is used south of Ecuador) These expressions require the subjunctive.

(**d**) *Al* + infinitive properly means 'on . . .-ing', but is sometimes seen with a conditional meaning: ?*al ser verdad esta afirmación se tendrá que repensar todo* 'if this claim is true, everything will have to be re-thought'. See 22.3.3. This should not be imitated.

(**e**) *A* + infinitive can have a conditional meaning in a few cases:

También estaba nervioso, a juzgar por la manera como relamía su bigotito (ES, Mex., dialogue)	He was nervous too to judge by how he was licking his moustache
A decir verdad, no me cae bien (= *si digo la verdad*)	To tell the truth, I don't like 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 puesto una multa	As if that weren't enough, they've given me a fine too!
Prefiero que envíe protección a mi esposa, y que asegure el entierro de mi hijo por si llega algún indeseable (MS, Mex., dialogue)	I prefer you to send protection for my wife and also for you to put a guard on my son's funeral in case some undesirable turns up

(**g**) *Donde* can sometimes mean a nervous 'what if . . .?' in Mexico, and possibly elsewhere in northern Latin America. In this context, European 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* (AM, Mex., dialogue; Sp. *anda que como le salga . . .*) 'don't even mention it, I'm really terrified. What if the poor little thing gets this man's nose?!', *donde me vea mi madre en cueros se muere del disgusto* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'if my mother sees me in the nude [i.e. on television] she'll die from the shock', *no sé cómo se van a casar. Donde estén igual de ignorantes en lo demás* (ibid. Sp. *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?!'

29.10 Translating 'if I were you . . .'

Yo que usted/Si yo fuera usted, me callaría	If I were you, I'd keep quiet
Si yo fuera usted, ya estaría buscando un abogado (MS, Mex., dialogue)	If I were you I'd already be looking for lawyer
Yo que usted compraba una nueva (ES, Mex., dialogue)	If I were you I'd buy a new one (refers to *una máquina de escribir* – typewriter)

(1) *Yo que tú/usted* is used on both continents. *Yo de ti/usted* is a Catalanism which is now quite widespread in Spain and is heard in some parts of Central America and the Caribbean, but is censured by manuals of good usage (e.g. Santamaría et al. 1989, 309): *yo de ti lo dejaba* 'if I were you I would leave it', *yo de Ana no lo haría* 'if I were Ana I wouldn't do it'.

30 Pronominal verbs

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- The terms 'reflexive' and 'pronominal' verb (Section 30.1.1)
- The reflexive meaning of pronominal verbs (e.g. *lavarse*, *matarse*) (Section 30.2)
- The reciprocal meaning of pronominal verbs ('they love one another', etc.) (Section 30.3)
- The intransitive meaning of pronominal verbs (e.g. the difference between *enamorar* and *enamorarse*) (Section 30.4)
- *Se de matización* (i.e. *se* used to add a shade of meaning) (Section 30.5–8)
- *Se comió una pizza*, *me bebí un litro de vino* (Section 30.9)
- Possible meanings of sentences like *se abrió la puerta* (Section 30.10)
- The obligatory use of *uno* where two *se*'s would occur side by side (Section 30.11)

30.1 Pronominal verbs: general

30.1.1 'Pronominal' verbs or 'reflexive' verbs?

Important: 'pronominal' refers to the *form* of these verbs, not to their meaning. A very large number of Spanish verbs can be made 'pronominal', even intransitive verbs like 'to be' (*estarse*) and 'to fall' (*caerse*). It is very misleading to call such verbs 'reflexive'. 'Reflexive' refers only to one of the *meanings* that a pronominal verb can have, i.e. that the subject performs an action on or for him/herself, as in *me afeito* 'I shave (myself)', *se lavan* 'they're washing (themselves)', etc.

Pronominal verbs are those which are accompanied by an object pronoun (i.e. *me*, *te*, *se*, *nos*, *os* or *se*) which is of the same person and number as the verb's subject: ***yo me*** *voy* 'I'm going away', ***nos*** *acostamos* 'we're going to bed', ***te*** *cansarás* 'you'll get tired', *me lavo* 'I'm washing myself', *se quieren mucho* 'they love one another a lot', (*él*) *se ha dormido* 'he's gone to sleep'. The usual object pronouns are used with these verbs except in the third person (*usted*, *ustedes* included), which uses the pronoun *se* for both singular and plural. Common forms of a typical pronominal verb are:

Infinitive *sentarse* 'to sit down' **Gerund** *sentándose*

Imperative *tú siéntate*, *vosotros/as sent**ao**s*, *usted siéntese*, *ustedes siéntense*. The *voseo* form is *sent**a**te*. See 21.2 for details about these imperative forms.

Present indicative	*yo me siento*	*nosotros/nosotras nos sentamos*
	tú te sientas	*vosotros/vosotras os sentáis*
	vos te sentás	
	él/ella/usted se sienta	*ellos/ellas/ustedes se sientan*

30.1.2 Possible uses of Spanish pronominal verbs

The several possible uses of Spanish pronominal verbs are shown here:

Name	Example	Singular or plural verb?	Person of verb	Living or non-living subject?	Section
1. Reflexive	*me lavo*	either	any	living	**30.2**
2. Reciprocal	*nos queremos, os habláis*	plural	any	living	**30.3**
3. Intransitive	*me alegro, se rompió la taza*	either	any, if living, otherwise 3rd	either	**30.4**
4. *Se de matización*	*se fue, se murió, te bajaste, me lo esperaba, se lo cree*, etc.	either	any, if living, otherwise 3rd	either	**30.5–8**
5. 'Unusual consumption'	*se bebió un litro de vino*	either	any	living	**30.9**
6. Passive *se*	*se construyó el puente*	either	third only	non-living (usually)	**Chapter 32**
7. 'Special construction'	*se arrestó a dos personas*	singular	third only	human, with some exceptions	**Chapter 32**
8. Impersonal *se*	*en España se vive bien*	singular	third only	human	**Chapter 32**

(1) Important: it must be remembered that pronominal verbs often have several possible meanings. *Se critican* could mean 'they criticize themselves', 'they criticize one another', or 'they are criticized' (passive *se*: Chapter 32). Context or the meaning of the verb usually makes the meaning clear.

(2) The term 'pronominal' verb can be criticized, but it is now adopted by the Academy: *NGLE* 41.13a. Avoiding the name 'reflexive' for this type of verb may stop students from imagining that sentences like *se construyó el puente* mean 'the bridge built itself' instead of 'the bridge was built'.

30.2 Reflexive meaning of pronominal verbs

30.2.1 Basic reflexive meaning of pronominal verbs

The reflexive meaning of a pronominal verb almost always shows that an action is done by the subject to or for him/herself: *se está duchando* '(s)he's taking a shower', *ustedes se alaban mucho* 'you praise yourselves a lot' (or 'you praise one another a lot'; see 30.3), *me voy a comprar otro traje* 'I'm going to buy (myself) another suit'.

This meaning is quite common, but it is not the most frequently encountered even though it is usually the first one studied, probably because it was the basic meaning of pronominal verbs in Classical Latin. Four important features of this reflexive meaning are:

(**a**) The subject must be living or have some sort of artificial intelligence, since doors or stones don't usually do things to themselves.

(**b**) The pronoun may stand for the direct or the indirect object: *se está afeitando* 'he's shaving' (*se* = direct object), *me estoy quitando la camisa* 'I'm taking my shirt off' (*me* is the indirect object; *la camisa* is the direct object), *ponte la gorra* 'put your cap on', etc.

(**c**) The action can be deliberate or accidental: *me estoy pintando las uñas* 'I'm painting my nails', *me he roto una uña* 'I've broken a nail'. In a few cases it may actually be done by someone else: see 30.2.3, especially note 3.

(**d**) The original verb is always transitive – i.e. it must be capable of having a direct object. If the original verb is intransitive then the pronominal form cannot have a reflexive meaning, cf. *ir* 'to go' (intransitive), *se va* '(s)he's going away' (*se de matización*, not 'reflexive').

Examples of the reflexive meaning of pronominal verbs:

Se está maquillando	(S)he's putting on make-up
Me corté con una lata	I cut myself on a tin
¡Qué bien se peina!	Doesn't (s)he do his/her (own) hair well!/ . . . get his/her hair done well!
¡Cuidado, que te vas a salpicar!	Careful, you're going to get splashed!
Ex presidente hondureño se declara culpable (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	Honduran ex-president admits guilt (lit. 'declares himself guilty')
Lávate las manos	Wash your hands
Esto me lo pido, esto me lo pido . . . (children overheard in a toy shop before Epiphany. See note 4)	I'm asking for this . . . and this . . .
Se mató en un accidente (see note 2)	(S)he got killed in an accident
Se daban crema para el sol	They were putting sun-cream on (or reciprocal 'they were putting sun-cream on each other')

(1) Spanish reflexive pronouns must be of the same person and number as the subject of the verb. Unlike informal English, Spanish rejects **nos compré un coche nuevo* for *compré un coche nuevo para nosotros* 'I bought us a new car'/'I bought a new car for us'. Likewise, one must say *hay que levantar**se*** 'time to get up', not **hay que levantarnos* (because *hay* is third-person). The latter construction is heard but is condemned by the *NGLE* 16.4j.

(2) *Se mató* can imply accidental death or suicide. If the death was accidental, it means that the subject was performing the action that killed him/her. *Se mató en un accidente de coche* '(s)he was killed in a car accident' implies that (s)he was driving. But one cannot say **se mató en una pelea* *'(s)he killed him/herself in a fight': *lo/le/la mataron en una pelea* since someone else is responsible.

(3) In colloquial language in Spain the reflexive meaning of a few verbs may imply that the action concerns or is meaningful for the subject and no one else: *tú sabrás lo que **te** dices* 'I guess *you* know what you're talking about (i.e. I don't)', *se lo digo yo, y yo sé lo que **me** digo* (RM, Sp., dialogue) 'I'm telling you and I know what I'm saying', *yo me entiendo* '*I* know what I'm referring to'/'*I* know what I'm talking about', *yo sé lo que me hago* '*I* know what I'm doing' (even if *you* don't). As far as we can tell, this construction is rare, in Latin America, but cf. *—¿Cuál ensalmo? —preguntó Corzas—. Uno que yo **me** sé —contestó Isabel* (AM, Mex., dialogue. Spain and Southern Cone *¿Qué ensalmo?*) ' "What magic spell?" Corzas asked. "One I know," Isabel replied'.

(4) In Spanish-speaking countries presents are traditionally given on *Reyes* or Three Kings' Day, i.e. Epiphany, 6 January. To the dismay of parents of young children, the news has spread in recent years that Santa Claus (*Papá Noel*) also hands out presents on 24 or 25 December.

30.2.2 Emphasis of the subject and the reflexive meaning

The subject can be emphasized by using subject pronouns, sometimes reinforced by the appropriate form of *solo* 'alone' or *mismo*. This construction also makes it clear that the meaning is

reflexive: *primero vistió a la niña y luego se vistió ella* 'first she dressed the child, then she dressed herself', *ya no te aguantas ni a ti mismo* (EP, Mex.) 'you can't even stand/put up with yourself', *te has perjudicado tú solo/mismo* 'you've harmed yourself'.

(1) If a preposition is used (including personal a), emphasis is made 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 tenía que hacerlo* 'she told herself she had to do it', *nos mentimos a nosotros mismos con frecuencia* 'we lie to ourselves frequently', *se lo había prometido a sí misma desde mucho antes del casamiento* (SG, Mex.) 'she'd promised it to herself long before the wedding'.

(2) 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 mismo/a ti mismo* 'you (masc.) are damaging yourself'.

30.2.3 Use of the reflexive meaning to mean 'to get something done for oneself'

With a few common verbs, and especially in Spain, the reflexive meaning may also include 'to get or have something done for oneself': *Ana se va a hacer un abrigo rojo* 'Ana's going to make herself a red coat'/'Ana is going to get a red coat made', *se han construido un chalet* 'they have built themselves a house (either themselves or to their specifications)', *me voy a cortar el pelo* 'I'm going to get my hair cut', *me peino en una peluquería famosa*' 'I get my hair done at a famous hairdressers'. Ambiguity can be removed by the appropriate use of the personal pronoun followed by *mismo* or *solo*, e.g. *me voy a cortar yo mismo el pelo* 'I'm going to cut my hair' (myself).

(1) This construction is not used everywhere in Latin America, especially in northern regions, in which case *mandar* or *hacer* are used, e.g. *mandó construir un palacio* or *hizo construir un palacio* '(s)he had a palace built'. Both of these constructions are also used in Spain.

(2) In a few cases, it is very unlikely that the subject will actually perform the action her or himself: *inyectarse contra el cólera* 'to get injected against cholera', *me voy a operar de cataratas* 'I'm going to be operated on for cataracts', *es evidente que se ha operado, no sólo una sino varias veces* (BE, Mex.) 'it's obvious she's been operated on not once but several times', *nunca me voy a operar la cara* (interview, *Capital*, Pe.) 'I'm never going to have my face operated on', *si te duele esa muela, debías sacártela* 'if that tooth's aching you ought to have it out' (less likely, 'you ought to pull it out'), *no me gusta nada ese corte que tienes en la mano. Debes ir a vértelo* (colloquial, Spain) 'I really don't like that cut on your hand. You ought to go and get it looked at'.

30.3 Reciprocal meaning of pronominal verbs

Plural pronominal verbs with human or animal subjects can have a reciprocal meaning, i.e. they may 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 this is the meaning:

Nos escribimos periódicamente	We write to one another regularly
Hace años que no se hablan	They haven't been talking to one another for years
Pasó mucho tiempo sin que nos viésemos/viéramos	We didn't see one another for a long time
Los novios hacían como que se odiaban, pero en el fondo se querían (ES, Mex., dialogue)	The bride and groom pretended to hate one another, but deep down they loved one another

Los guardianes parecían vigilarse los unos a los otros (GGM, Col.)	The guards seemed to be watching one another
Se hacen la compra los unos a los otros	They do one another's shopping
Siempre se ponen pegas (*el uno al otro*)	They're always finding fault with one another

(1) Important: if both female and male subjects are involved, masculine pronouns are used: *los muchachos y las muchachas se ayudan* ***los unos a los otros*** 'the boys and girls help one another', *Pablo y Marta se quieren mucho* ***el uno al otro*** 'Pablo and Marta love one another a lot'. *El uno a la otra* might eliminate the idea of reciprocity, i.e. suggest that he loved her but not vice versa. However, reciprocal forms like *el uno a la otra* are occasionally seen in literary styles; see *NGLE* 16.5i.

30.4 Pronominal verbs and intransitivity

30.4.1 Common intransitive pronominal verbs

One important and constantly encountered use of the pronominal form is to show that a verb is intransitive – i.e. it cannot have a direct object. English does not always differentiate transitive from intransitive verbs: cf. 'I've finished the dinner'/'the dinner has finished', 'I boiled it'/'it boiled', 'we grow carrots here'/'carrots grow here'. But with some important exceptions, Spanish marks the intransitive meaning of an otherwise transitive verb by making it pronominal: Compare:

Transitive	Intransitive
abrir to open (but see 30.7.1)	*abrirse* to open (intransitive)
acabar to finish (transitive and intransitive)	*acabarse* to end (intransitive)
acostar to put someone to bed	*acostarse* to go to bed
aprovechar to make the most of	*aprovecharse* (*de*) to take advantage of
beneficiar to benefit	*beneficiarse* (*de*) to benefit from
casar to marry someone off (also intransitive in archaic or regional styles)	*casarse* to get married
cerrar to close	*cerrarse* to close (intransitive)
colgar to hang something	*colgarse* to 'hang' (computers)
despertar to wake someone up (also intransitive)	*despertarse* to wake up (intransitive)
desplazar to shift/scroll	*desplazarse* to move about
divorciar to divorce (someone)	*divorciarse* to get divorced
dormir to put somebody to sleep (also 'to sleep')	*dormirse* to go to sleep
enamorar to make someone fall in love	*enamorarse de* to fall in love with
estropear to spoil something	*estropearse* to get spoilt/break down
involucrar to implicate	*involucrarse* to be/get involved
meter to put in	*meterse* to get in/to interfere
perder to lose	*perderse* to get lost (but see 30.7.31)
preocupar to worry somebody	*preocuparse* to worry
presentar to introduce people	*presentarse* to appear unexpectedly
terminar (see *acabar*)	*terminarse* (see *acabarse*)
tirar to throw/pull	*tirarse* to jump/to dive

30.4.2 Pronominalization can radically change the meaning of a verb

Sometimes the pronominal form of the verb is radically different in meaning:

cambiar to change	*cambiarse de* to change clothes/house
correr to run	*correrse* to be ashamed/'to move over', 'to come' (Sp., sexually: vulgar)
desenvolver to unwrap	*desenvolverse* to be good at/skilful in something
despedir to see someone off/to fire/sack someone	*despedirse de* to take one's leave/say goodbye
empeñar to pawn/pledge	*empeñarse en* to insist on doing something
gastar to spend	*gastarse* to wear out
llevar to take/to wear	*llevarse* to take with one/to steal
negar to deny	*negarse a* to refuse to do something
oponer to contrast two views	*oponerse* to oppose
valer to be worth	*valerse de* to make use of

(1) Some pronominal verbs are being replaced by the non-pronominal form, e.g. *entrenar* for *entrenarse* 'to train', which is now widespread (*entreno mañana en el gimnasio* 'I'm training tomorrow at the gym'), or *encarar* for *encararse con* 'to face up to (a problem)': *Arco 93 trata de encarar la crisis del mercado de arte* (*El País*, Spain) 'Arco 93 is trying to face up to the economic crisis in the art market', *el medio idóneo para encarar nuestros problemas* (interview, *La Jornada*, Mex.) 'the ideal method of tackling our problems'.

(2) *Estrenar* 'to perform or to show for the first time' is transitive: *niña estrena prótesis de mano hecha con impresión 3D* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'girl shows off for first time artificial hand made by 3D printer', *estrenar zapatos nuevos* 'to wear new shoes for the first time'. But in the Southern Cone the non-pronominal form may be intransitive: *"El Marginal" premiada antes de estrenar* '*El Marginal* [a film] wins award before it is released' (*La Nación*, Arg.), Sp. *estrenarse.*

30.4.3 Pronominal verbs that have no transitive counterpart

Some pronominal intransitive verbs have no non-pronominal counterparts, at least in normal language. These are some of the more common:

abstenerse to abstain	*ensimismarse* to become introspective	*quejarse* to complain
acurrucarse to crouch	*fugarse* to flee	*rebelarse* to rebel
arrepentirse to repent	*inmiscuirse* to interfere	*regodearse* to delight in
atenerse a to limit oneself to	*jactarse* to boast	*resentirse* to feel the effects of
atreverse a to dare	*mofarse* to mock	*sincerarse* to be sincere
comportarse to behave	*obstinarse en* to insist on	*suicidarse* to commit suicide
dignarse to deign to		*vanagloriarse* to boast

30.4.4 Some non-pronominal verbs may be intransitive or transitive

There are so many intransitive pronominal verbs in Spanish that beginners sometimes assume that all intransitive counterparts of transitive verbs must be pronominal. But a number of non-pronominal verbs have both a transitive and an intransitive meaning. We can say *lo/le suspendieron en francés* 'they failed him in French' and *suspendió en francés* '(s)he failed in French', *su cabeza asomaba por la ventana* (or *se asomaba*) 'his/her head was sticking out of the window' and *asomaba la cabeza por la ventana* '(s)he was sticking his/her head out of the window', *desconectó la*

radio '(s)he disconnected the radio' and *en clase siempre desconecta* 'in class (s)he always switches off' (i.e. 'day-dreams'), *lo empezó* '(s)he/you began it' and *empezó* '(s)he/it/you began', *tenemos que hablar* (intransitive) 'we need to talk', *lo tenemos que hablar* 'we need to talk about it' (transitive).

The following are common examples of verbs that can be either transitive or intransitive without changing their form (verbs marked with an asterisk may optionally be made pronominal when used intransitively. A good dictionary should provide further details):

*acabar** to end (see 30.7.2)
*aclarar** to brighten/lighten/ e.g. after a storm
*adelgazar** to slim/lose weight
*aflojar** to loosen
aprobar to approve/to pass (an examination)
*aumentar** to grow bigger/to make bigger
*avanzar** to advance/move forward
*bajar** to go down/to lift down (see 30.6.1)
comenzar to begin
*conectar** to connect
crecer to grow (for *crecerse*) see 30.7.10)
*despertar** to wake up (see 30.7.15)
*disminuir** to diminish/ reduce
*empeorar** to worsen
*encoger** to shrink
enfermar to make/get sick (*enfermarse* in Lat. Am.)
*enflaquecer** to lose weight
*enfriar** to grow cold
*engordar** to fatten/get fat
*enloquecer** to go mad
hervir to boil
**iniciar* (can be intransitive in Mexico) 'to start'
*mejorar** to improve (see 30.7.23)
*oscurecer** to darken
*quebrar** to snap/break
resucitar to come back to life, to resuscitate
*sangrar** to bleed/to indent (a text)
*secar** to dry
*subir** to go up/to lift up
*terminar** to end
*vestir** to wear (see 30.7.37)

30.5. ***Se de matización*: general**

The term *se de matización* is taken from Moreira and Butt (1996). It is, however, inaccurate in the sense that such verbs appear with other pronouns besides *se*, e.g. *me voy*, *te duermes*, *nos trajimos*, *os creéis*, etc.

Se de matización (lit. '*se* that adds a shade of meaning') refers to the use of the pronominal form to modify the meaning of the original verb in some way. Compare *bajó del árbol* and *se bajó del árbol* '(s)he came down from the tree' (the difference between the two is barely translatable), or *salió del cine* '(s)he left the cinema' and ***se*** *salió del cine* '(s)he walked out of the cinema'. Several points must be made about this construction:

(**a**) It is confined to a limited and apparently closed series of common transitive and intransitive verbs. The fact, for example, that *volver* 'to return' has a pronominal counterpart *volverse* 'to return before time'/'to turn back' (not to be confused with *volverse* 'to become' or 'to turn round') does not mean that *regresar* 'to return' also has a pronominal counterpart *regresarse* (but the latter form is used in Latin America); nor does *descender* 'to descend' have a form **descenderse*, despite the fact that *bajar* has the form *bajarse*. For this reason these verbs must be learned separately. The most common verbs that take *se de matización* are:

abrir	*coger*	*devolver**	*figurar*	*merecer*	*pensar*	*salir*	*ver*
acabar	*conocer*	*empeorar*	*guardar*	*montar*	*perder*	*saltar*	*vestir*
aguantar	*correr*	*encontrar*	*imaginar*	*morir*	*probar*	*sentir*	*volver*
aparecer	*crecer*	*enfermar**	*ir*	*olvidar*	*quedar*	*sonreír*	
bajar	*creer*	*entrar*	*leer*	*oscurecer*	*regresar**	*subir*	
caer	*decidir*	*envejecer**	*llegar*	*parar*	*reír*	*suponer*	
callar	*dejar*	*escapar*	*llevar*	*parecer*	*resbalar*	*temer*	
cambiar	*desayunar*	*esperar*	*marchar*	*pasar*	*resistir*	*traer*	
cerrar	*despertar*	*estar*	*mejorar*	*pasear*	*robar**	*venir*	

*The pronominal form of asterisked verbs is used in Latin America but not Spain.

Only a selection of these is discussed in detail below. The rest should be sought in a good dictionary.

(**b**) Some of the pronominal forms described below are more characteristic of spoken language, and the non-pronominal form is used in formal styles. Thus, only *morir* 'to die' is used in formal Spanish, whereas both *morir* and *morirse* are heard in everyday speech, often with a slight difference of meaning.

(**c**) For specifically Latin-American examples of *se de matización* see 30.8.

(**d**) The nuance added by pronominalization is sometimes very subtle. The ability to distinguish correctly between forms like *llegar/llegarse* 'to arrive'/'to approach' or *traer/traerse* 'to bring' is the mark of the true master of idiomatic Spanish.

(**e**) The possibility of *se de matización* does not mean that the same verb is not pronominalized for one of the reasons discussed elsewhere in this chapter. Out of context, a form like *se encontraron* can mean 'they found by chance', 'they met by chance', (*se de matización*), 'they found themselves' (reflexive), 'they found one another' (reciprocal) or 'they were found' (passive *se*). Context usually clarifies the meaning. Pronominalized verbs of motion tend to share common features of meaning, so they are discussed separately at 30.6. Other examples of *se de matización* are discussed at 30.7.

30.6 Verbs of motion and *se de matización*

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, or as well as, the destination, cf. *ir* 'to go somewhere', *irse* 'to go *away from* somewhere': *voy a España* 'I'm going to Spain', *me voy* 'I'm leaving'/'going', *me voy a España* 'I'm leaving for/going away to Spain'.

(**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 walk out'/'to leak' (liquids, gases). Sometimes both nuances are combined.

30.6.1 *Bajar/bajarse* 'to go down'; *subir/subirse* 'to go up'

As far as 'getting off/out of' and 'getting in/onto' some kind of vehicle is concerned, the forms are usually interchangeable, although informal language prefers the pronominal form. Compare *en Cuajimalpa se bajaron a comer quesadillas* 'they got out [of the bus] in Cuajimalpa to eat some quesadillas' and *cuando el taxista bajó del auto para calcular la longitud del majestuoso embotellamiento* 'when the taxi driver got out to calculate the length of the stupendous traffic jam' (both examples from ES, Mex.). More examples:

Vino hacia ellos sonriente tan pronto se bajaron del coche (MD, Sp.)	He came towards them, smiling, as soon as they got out of the car
Después de 10 minutos, bajó del carro con cara sonriente, (GR, Mex. *carro = coche* in Spain)	Ten minutes later he got out of the car smiling
Recibí órdenes de subirme a un camión militar (EP, Mex., dialogue. *Camión* = 'lorry'/'truck' in Spain)	I was given orders to get on a military truck/bus
Isabel subió al tren (AM, Mex.)	Isabel got on the train

(1) Ordinary going up and down (e.g. stairs, lifts) usually requires the non-pronominal form unless reference is made to a whole set of stairs. See 30.9 for a more detailed discussion of the latter construction:

Espérame abajo/arriba que bajo/subo enseguida	Wait for me downstairs/upstairs – I'll be down/up right away
Subía siempre las escaleras lentamente	(S)he always used to go upstairs slowly
(*Se*) *subió las escaleras de un tirón* (the whole flight of stairs; see 30.9)	(S)he rushed upstairs without stopping

(2) When the urgency or figurative nature of the action is stressed, the pronominal form is usual:

Se subieron a la tapia de un salto	They jumped on top of the garden wall
Súbase por los andenes, como sea, pero arranque (GGM, Col., dialogue. Sp. *los andenes* = *las aceras*)	Drive up onto the pavements/sidewalks, anything you like, but get moving!
Se subía por las paredes	(S)he was climbing up the wall (with rage, not literally)

(3) *Bajar*(*se*)/*subir*(*se*) can also be used colloquially as transitive verbs meaning 'to take up', and 'to take down': *bájate/baja estos tiestos al jardín* 'take these flowerpots down to the garden'.

(4) The non-pronominal form is used for 'to increase', 'to diminish': *los precios suben/bajan* 'prices go up/down'.

(5) *Bajar* (or *descargar*) translates 'to download' in computer jargon.

30.6.2 *Caer/caerse*

The non-pronominal form can emphasize either the 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'. The non-pronominal form is also reserved for the following figurative meanings:

Cayó en la guerra	(S)he fell (was killed) in the war
El Gobierno ha caído	The government has fallen/has been toppled
Esa calle cae lejos de aquí	That street lies far from here
caer en la tentación	to fall into temptation
Ya caigo	I get it/I understand

Caerse suggests accidental falling ('falling over', 'falling down'), although *caer* alone can be used for the same meaning:

(*Se*) *cayó de la mesa*	It fell off the table (accidentally)
¡Que no se te caiga el paquete!	Don't drop the parcel!
No sé si corrió a pesar de la herida, no sé si se cayó, no sé qué fue de él (EP, Mex., dialogue)	I don't know whether he ran despite the wound, I don't know whether he fell over, I don't know what happened to him

30.6.3 *Entrar/entrarse*

Entrar 'to enter' is by far the more common form. The status of *entrarse* is problematic: it was once quite common but most speakers now reject it although it is sometimes heard in popular speech

to emphasize point of departure or furtive entry, as in *la familia de osos que se entró a una piscina* (headline Col.) 'the family of bears that got into a swimming pool'. Foreign learners should stick to *entrar.*

(1) In the sentence *se entra por aquí* 'one goes in through here'/'the entrance is this way' the construction is *se impersonal*, not *se de matización*.

30.6.4 *Escapar/escaparse*

When it is intransitive the pronominal form is common but optional: *los prisioneros* (*se*) *escaparon* 'the prisoners escaped', *no me digas que otra vez se escaparon las pupilas* (MVLl, Pe., dialogue) 'don't tell me the girls at the convent have escaped again', *tendría que haber visto cómo intentaba escaparse* (AC, Mex., dialogue) 'you (*usted*) should have seen how he was trying to escape', but *era presa de Stalin. No podía escapar de él* (RM, Sp.) 'she was Stalin's prey. She couldn't escape from him'. If an indirect object pronoun is included, *escaparse* is required: *se le escapó un rugido bastante masculino* (GR, Mex.) 'he let out a pretty masculine roar', *por su sordera algo se le escapaba* (EP, Mex.) 'because of his deafness he was missing something'. The non-pronominal form is used for figurative and transitive meanings: *escapar con vida* 'to escape with one's life', *escapar del peligro* 'to escape danger', *escapar a la calle* 'to take to the streets', *escapar a la justicia* 'to escape justice', *la inseguridad no escapó a la atención del Director General* (CF, Mex.) 'the uncertainty did not escape the Director General's attention'.

30.6.5 *Ir/irse*

The difference between the two is more or less the same as between 'to go' and 'to go away', French *aller/s'en aller.* The pronominal form stresses departure although this does not exclude the possibility of mentioning destination as well:

Vamos a casa de Pepe (destination stressed)	We're going to Pepe's house
Me voy a casa de Pepe (departure stressed)	I'm off to/leaving for Pepe's house
Se casaron en el tren y se fueron de luna de miel a Bariloche (*Río Negro*, Arg.)	They got married on the train and left on their honeymoon for Bariloche
. . . un beso como el que recibía Jim antes de irse a la escuela (JP, Mex.)	. . . a kiss like the one Jim used to get before he left for school
Vete (point of departure stressed)	Go away
Este avión va a Caracas (destination stressed)	This plane's going to Caracas
¡Voy!/¡Ya voy! (destination stressed)	I'm coming!/I'll be right there!

30.6.6 *Llegar/llegarse*

Llegar means 'to arrive' and is by far the more common form. *Llegarse* is colloquial and means 'to approach' 'to pop over to', 'to get as far as':

Llegamos a Madrid	We arrived in Madrid
Llégate/Acércate a la tienda de enfrente	Go over to the shop/store opposite
Me hice paso entre la gente y me llegué a la Reina	I made my way through the crowd and got as far as the Queen
El iPhone se llegó a México (*Excélsior*, Mex. In Spain *el iPhone llegó* is more likely)	The iPhone has reached Mexico!

Se tomaron un colectivo y se llegaron hasta la casa de unos parientes de Pablo (*Lugcos*, Arg. *Colectivo* is Latin-American for a bus or for a shared taxi)	They took a bus and went as far as the house of some of Pablo's relatives

30.6.7 ***Marchar/marcharse***

Marchar means 'to march' and *marcharse* means 'to leave a place', but *marchar* may also have the same meaning as *marcharse*:

¡Mira cómo marchan los soldados!	Look at the soldiers marching!
Me marcho/Me voy	I'm leaving
El tren ya se marchó/ya se fue/ya salió	The train's already left
Era una lástima que las circunstancias la obligaran a marcharse tan pronto (ES, Mex.)	It was a pity that circumstances obliged her to leave so soon

30.6.8 ***Pasar/pasarse***

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 30.7.30.) *Pasar* suggests normal motion (it is also used in card games: *paso* 'I pass'):

Cuando pasó la frontera	When (s)he crossed the frontier
La carretera pasa por el pueblo	The road goes through the village
Pasamos a hablar de la situación actual	We went on to talk of the current situation

Pasarse suggests unwanted or illegal passage or over-stepping the mark:

Se pasó de la raya	(S)he went beyond the mark/overdid it
No te pases	Don't go too far/Don't overdo it
¡No te pases de sol! (*Mujer a Mujer*, Col.)	Don't overdo (exposure to) the sun!
Se pasó el semáforo en rojo (MS, Mex., dialogue)	He jumped the red traffic light
Si estuviera Valeria aquí no te pasarías de listo (EM, Mex., dialogue)	If Valeria was here you wouldn't be so smart/clever

(1) *Pasárselo bien/mal* – more frequently *pasarlo bien* - is 'to have a good/bad time', e.g. *pásatelo bien/pásalo bien* 'have a good time' (sometimes *pasársela* in Latin America). Note also *no les pasa ni una* '(s)he doesn't let them get away with a thing', *pasa de todo* '(s)he doesn't care about anything'.

(2) *Pasarse* a can mean 'to switch over', as in *me pasé del prepago a un contrato* 'I switched from pay-as-you-go to a contract'; also *se pasó al bando enemigo* '(s)he went over to the enemy' (i.e. changed sides).

(3) The pronominal form with an indirect object may mean everywhere 'to get over': *ya se le pasará* (MC, Mex., dialogue) 'he'll soon get over it'.

30.6.9 ***Salir/salirse***

Salir means 'to go out'/'to leave' without further implications. *Salirse* implies untimely or unexpected departure or, applied to liquids or gases, accidental leakages or escapes:

Salimos del cine cuando terminó la película (as expected)	We left the cinema when the film ended
Nos salimos del cine porque la película era muy violenta (unexpected)	We left the cinema (before the end) because the film was very violent
Salí del convento a las cinco (intended)	I left the convent at 5 o'clock
Me salí del convento a los treinta años (unexpected)	I left the convent at the age of thirty
El agua sale por aquí (intended)	The water comes out here
El agua se salía de la bañera (accidental)	The water was overflowing from the bath
El FMI se salió de las normas (*Clarín*, Arg.)	The IMF (International Monetary Fund) has exceeded its powers
Se salió de la carretera (ES, Mex., dialogue)	He went off the road (i.e. crashed)

30.6.10 *Saltar/saltarse*

Saltar is the normal word for 'to jump'. It can also mean 'to jump over', but *saltarse* is replacing it in informal language in the latter meaning. *Saltarse* is used for illegal jumps, e.g. traffic lights or starting signals:

Saltaban de alegría	They were jumping for joy
No saltes a conclusiones	Don't jump to conclusions
Nunca se había saltado un semáforo en rojo en toda su vida (LS, Ch., dialogue)	He had never jumped a red light in his life
Te saltaste la pistola de salida	You jumped the starting pistol
. . . ese extraño personaje que se saltaba las fórmulas de cortesía (MS, Mex.)	. . . that strange character who skipped all the formulas of politeness
Mi corazón se saltó un latido	My heart skipped a beat
Se saltó la hoguera	(S)he jumped over the bonfire

30.6.11 *Subir/subirse* (see *bajar/bajarse*)

30.6.12 *Venir/venirse*

Venirse suggests 'to come away from somewhere' either permanently or for a long time. Applied to non-living things, it implies accidental or unexpected arrivals. *Venir* simply means 'to come to a place':

Ha venido de París a pasar unos días (point of departure not stressed)	(S)he's come from Paris to spend a few days
Se ha venido de Madrid porque no aguanta la contaminación (point of departure stressed)	(S)he's come here from Madrid because (s)he can't stand the pollution
¿Por qué no Vienes conmigo? (destination stressed)	Why don't you come with me?
¿Por qué no te vienes conmigo? (point of departure stressed)	Why don't you leave (him/her/this place and) come with me?
Le ofreció más por venirse con él (MS, Mex.)	He offered him more to come and work for him
Véngase para acá y conversamos (GGM, Col., dialogue)	Come over here and let's talk
cuando las Torres Gemelas se vinieron abajo . . . (idem)	when the Twin Towers collapsed . . .

Mira la tormenta que se nos viene encima (accidental)	Look at the storm that's going to hit us (lit. 'that's coming down on us')
Toda la sangre se le vino a los pies (ES, Mex.)	All his blood rushed to his feet

(1) *Venirse* also has the obvious sexual meaning in Latin America and should be used with caution.

30.6.13 *Volver/volverse*; Latin-American *regresar/regresarse, devolver/devolverse*

Volver as a verb of motion means 'to return'. Its subject can be living or non-living, e.g. summer, happiness, fine weather. *Volver a* + infinitive is the most common way of translating 'to do something again': see 36.6a.

Nunca volveré a aquella casa	I'll never return to that house
Has vuelto muy moreno	You've come back very suntanned
Yo volví al espectáculo cuando me divorcié (ES, Mex., dialogue)	I went back into show business when I got divorced
Vuelve la primavera	Spring returns/is returning

Volverse as a verb of motion may mean 'to turn back half-way', 'to return before time' (unplanned return), though the non-pronominal form can have the same meaning:

Selene se volvió a su asiento (ES, Mex.)	Selene went back to her seat
(*Me*) *volví antes de llegar*	I turned back before arriving
Había pensado muy seriamente en divorciarse y volverse a Dinamarca (LS, Sp.)	He'd thought very seriously about getting divorced and going back to Denmark
Vuélvanse a Montevideo que yo en quince días estoy allá (*Tenfield Digital*, interview, Ch.)	Go back to Montevideo. I'll be there in 15 days

(1) In Latin America, as well as *volver*(*se*), *regresar*(*se*) is much used for 'to return' with the same difference between the pronominal and non-pronominal forms (*regresarse* is not used in Spain): *Helen se había regresado a Puebla* (AM, Mex., dialogue; Sp. *se había vuelto* or *había regresado*) 'Helen had gone back to Puebla'.

(2) Many countries north of the Southern Cone also use *devolverse* for 'to return': *pero se había devuelto del Camino Real* (GGM, Col.) 'but he'd turned back on the highway', *abandonó la oficina . . . sin embargo se devolvió* (EM, Mex.) 'he left the office; nevertheless he returned'. *Devolver* (transitive – not a verb of motion) is standard Spanish everywhere for 'to give back' (money, borrowed items, etc.). It can also mean 'to throw up', i.e. 'to vomit'.

(3) *Volverse* has other meanings everywhere, e.g. 'to become' (see 31.3.2) or 'to turn round' as in *se volvió hacia ella* '(s)he turned towards her'. 'To make a U-turn' in a vehicle is *dar la vuelta*.

30.7 *Se de matización* with miscellaneous verbs

Pronominalization adds nuances of meaning to a number of other verbs, of which the following are frequently encountered:

30.7.1 *Abrir/abrirse* and *cerrar/cerrarse*

Abrir 'to open' is used when the verb is transitive: *abrimos la puerta/un programa* 'we opened the door/a program(me)'. *Abrirse* is used when the verb is intransitive: *la puerta se abrió* 'the door

opened'. However, *abrir* is also used intransitively for the scheduled opening of establishments: *¿cuándo abre el restaurante?* 'when is the restaurant opening?', *el museo abre de martes a domingo en el horario de 8:00 am–6:00pm* (website, Cu.) 'the museum opens from Tuesday to Sundays, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.'*Cerrar* 'to close' behaves in the same way: *la puerta se cerró* 'the door closed' (on its own) but *el único cine del pueblo ha cerrado* 'the only cinema in the village/town has closed down', *los bancos ya habían cerrado y no abrirían hasta cuatro días después* (JA, Mex.) 'the banks were already closed and wouldn't open for the next four days', *lo que ha logrado es que cierren más de 40 empresas* (*Expreso*, Ec.) 'what it has achieved is that more than forty firms are closing down'. *Se abrió/cerró la ventana* may also be an example of passive *se*, 'the window was opened/closed'.

30.7.2 *Acabar/acabarse*

Acabar can be used transitively and intransitively, like its English translation 'to finish': *han acabado el proyecto* 'they've finished the project', *el proyecto ha acabado* 'the project's finished'. *Acabarse* is also common for the intransitive meaning. It is much used to mean 'to run out': *se ha acabado la cerveza* 'the beer's run out', *¡bueno, esto se ha acabado!* 'this is the last straw!'/'this is the end!', *cuando cayó Lehman supe que mi tiempo se había acabado* (JV, Mex., dialogue) 'when Lehman Brothers collapsed I knew my time was up'.

30.7.3 *Aguantar/aguantarse*

The basic meaning of *aguantar* is 'to tolerate'/'to bear': *este puente aguanta pesos muy fuertes* 'this bridge supports very heavy weights', *no puedo aguantarlos* 'I can't stand them'. *Aguantarse* is intransitive and means 'to stand upright' – *la abuela ya no se aguanta sola* 'grandmother can't stand on her own any more' – or 'to put up with something': *si te duele esa muela tendrás que aguantarte hasta el lunes* (or *aguantar hasta el lunes*) 'if that tooth is aching, you'll have to hold out until Monday', *bueno, a aguantarse* 'oh well, we'll just have to put up with it', *le disgustaban algunos comentarios de F.S. pero se aguantaba* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'he disliked some of F.S.'s remarks but he put up with it'.

30.7.4 *Aparecer/aparecerse*

Aparecer means 'to appear' without further nuances. *Aparecerse* is used for apparitions:

Manuel apareció en la iglesia	Manuel appeared/turned up at the church
La Virgen de Guadalupe se apareció al indio Juan Diego	The Virgin of Guadalupe appeared before the Indian Juan Diego

(1) In Latin America, and sometimes in Spain, *aparecerse* is used of people appearing, especially unexpectedly: *en vez de despedirla, como Flora temía, se apareció, contrito, en la covacha de la rue du Foarre* (MVLl, Pe.) 'instead of firing her, which is what Flora feared, he turned up, full of remorse, at the hovel on the rue du Foarre', *un día el hombre y las tres mujeres dejan de aparecerse por el edificio* (AC, Mex.) 'one day the man and the three women stop showing up at the building'.

30.7.5 *Callar/callarse*

Callar must be used when it is transitive: *no me van a callar* 'they are not going to silence me'. Used intransitively, *callar* and *callarse* are more or less interchangeable, except when the subject is non-living, in which case the pronominal form is less usual: *la música calló de repente* 'the music suddenly stopped'. When the subject is human or animal the pronominal form is more informal:

el niño (*se*) *calló en cuanto le dieron el biberón* 'the little boy stopped crying as soon as he was given a bottle', *y luego nos callábamos y oíamos la radio* (CSG, Mex., dialogue) 'then we used to stop talking and we listened to the radio', *calló y corrió a otro lugar de la tienda* (CF, Mex.) 'he fell silent and ran to another place in the shop/store'.

(1) *Quieto* is a false friend. It means 'still/not moving' and not 'quiet': *¡estate quieto!* 'sit still!/stop moving around!'

30.7.6 *Cambiar/cambiarse*

Cambiar means 'to change' in the sense of 'to alter', and is used transitively or intransitively: *hay que cambiar el aceite* 'we have to change the oil', *la situación ha cambiado* 'the situation has changed', *Ángela ha cambiado desde que va a la universidad* 'Angela has changed since she's been going to university'. The most usual meaning of *cambiarse* is 'to get changed' or 'to move on': *me trajo ropa, quién sabe de dónde, para que me cambiara* (AC, Mex.) 'he brought me some clothes, who knows where from, so I could change', *me cambié de trabajo* (*Prensa Gráfica*, ES) 'I changed jobs'.

30.7.7 *Coger/cogerse*

Coger is used for physical catching or grasping hold of: *coger un tren/autobús/una pelota/un ladrón/una flor* 'to catch a train/bus/ball/thief'/'to pick a flower', etc. The pronominal form is rare, at least in standard European Spanish, but it is found in colloquial phrases referring to drunkenness: contrast *coger un catarro* 'to catch a cold' and *cogerse* (or *coger*) *una borrachera* 'to get drunk'. *Coger* can also mean 'to take', 'to pick up' in Latin America: *tardé en decidirme a coger el teléfono* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'I took my time before picking up the phone'. However, since in the Americas *coger* is a vulgar or very familiar word for the sex act, many speakers there prefer to use *agarrar* (Sp. 'to clutch', 'to seize'): *esa noche, de tanto gritar y tomar con hielo agarró una bronquitis y ya nunca se volvió a poner bueno* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'that night he caught bronchitis from so much shouting and drinking liquor on the rocks and he never got better again'.

30.7.8 *Conocer/conocerse*

Conocer covers all meanings of the French *connaître* 'to know a person/place' (cf. *saber* 'to know a fact/the truth/a language', etc.). It can also mean 'to meet for the first time': *la conocí en Madrid* 'I met her in Madrid'. The pronominal form, as well as meaning 'to know oneself', may imply total knowledge and can add a sarcastic note: *se conoce todo Madrid* '(s)he knows the whole of Madrid' (but not just **se conoce Madrid*), *me lo conozco . . .* 'I know him (and his little tricks . . .)', *me los conozco de arriba a abajo* (*Río Negro*, Arg.) 'I know them from top to bottom', *me conozco esa carretera de día y de noche* (*La Jornada*, Mex., dialogue) 'I really know that road by day and by night'.

(1) The American English 'to meet with', British 'to meet (but not for the first time)' is *reunirse con*, *verse con*, *quedar con.*

30.7.9 *Correr/correrse*

Correr is overwhelmingly the more frequent form and is used for meanings including 'to run', 'to flow', 'to hurry', even for vehicles: *no corras tanto* 'don't go/drive so fast'. The only use of the pronominal form in respectable language is to mean 'to shift over', 'to move over' (intransitive): *córrete hacia acá para que el señor pueda sentarse* 'move over this way so the gentleman can sit down', *le pidió a Félix que se corriera. Él le contestó que no, se iba a bajar pronto* (CF, Mex.) 'she asked Felix to move over. He answered no, he was getting out soon'. Foreigners should be careful since in Spain it also has the sexual meaning of 'to come' (Latin-American *venirse*).

30.7.10 *Crecer/crecerse*

Crecer means to grow in size. *Crecerse* means to grow in worth or value:

La hierba crece mucho con tanta lluvia	The grass grows quickly with so much rain
¡Ya crezcan idiotas! (graffiti in Mexico City. In Spain *crecer* means physical growth)	Grow up you idiots!
Hay personas que se crecen con el peligro	There are people who grow stronger when they are in danger
Éste, por su parte, se crecía ante el castigo y, en vez de ceder . . .	The latter, for his part, grew stronger under attack and instead of yielding . . .

(1) In parts of Latin America *crecerse* means 'to be brought up': *yo me crecí* (Sp. *me crié*) *en Bolivia* 'I was raised in Bolivia'.

30.7.11 *Creer/creerse*

The non-pronominal form translates most meanings of 'to believe'/'to think that . . .'. *Creer en* 'to believe in' appears only in the non-pronominal form. The pronominal form usually implies unfounded belief, although its use is often optional:

Creo que han llegado	I think they've arrived
Creo en ella	I believe in her
Ese/Ése (*se*) *cree que habla francés*	He thinks he speaks French
(*Se*) *cree todo lo que le dicen*	(S)he believes everything they tell her/him
No se crea que era un irresponsable (ES, Mex., dialogue)	Don't get the idea that he was irresponsible
Pero no crea que soy tan parlanchina (ibid.)	But don't get the idea that I'm such a gossip

(1) *Creerse* can also emphasize unbelief: *no me creo todavía que haya vuelto* 'I still can't believe that (s)he's come back'.

(2) Idiom: *se lo tiene creído* '(s)he has a high opinion of himself/herself', (British) '(s)he fancies him/herself'.

(3) *Pensar/pensarse* 'to think' is used colloquially like *creer/creerse*, although good style respects the difference between *creer* 'to believe'/'to have an opinion' and *pensar* 'to think', i.e. indulge in thinking activity, as in *es un escritor que piensa mucho* 'he's a writer who thinks a lot'. *Pensarse algo* means 'to think something through carefully': *¡piénsatelo mucho!* 'think it through carefully!'

30.7.12 *Decidir/decidirse*

With a living subject, the verb means 'to decide': *ha decidido dejar el trabajo* '(s)he's decided to give up work/give up his/her job'. It can also be used transitively in the sense of 'to make up someone's mind'/'to decide the outcome': *lo que me decidió fue el estado del presupuesto* 'what made up my mind was the state of the budget', . . . *lo que decidió el resultado del partido* . . . '. . . what decided the outcome of the game . . .'. The pronominal form implies a decision taken after hesitation and effort, cf. 'to make up one's mind': *¡decídete!* 'make up your mind!', *lo que más le costaba era decidirse a involucrarme en algo sucio* (JM, Sp.) 'what he found hardest was to make up his mind to involve me in something dirty', *y sabiendo cuánto arriesgaba, se decidió a pedir ayuda a Adrián Melgoza* (MS, Mex.) 'and knowing how much he was risking, he made up his mind to ask AM for help'.

30.7.13 *Dejar/dejarse*

Dejar translates 'to let/allow', 'to leave' (in the sense of 'abandon') and also 'to lend'. *Dejarse* emphasizes accidental leaving behind:

Deja tu maleta aquí	Leave your suitcase here
Déjame tu móvil	Lend me your mobile/cell phone
cuando dejó el ejército . . .	when (s)he left the army . . .
Me he dejado la llave en casa	I've left the key at home

(1) This use of *dejarse* for accidental leaving seems to be confined to Spain. Latin-American informants said *dejé la plata* . . . 'I left my money . . .' (in Spain *la plata* = 'silver' and *el dinero* = 'money'), which in European Spanish might imply deliberate leaving. *Dejarse* is used on both continents in sentences like *¡déjense de tonterías!* (headline, *El Mañana*, Mex.) 'cut/stop the nonsense!'

(2) A reflexive meaning is found in *me dejé besar* 'I allowed myself to be kissed', *se han dejado* 'they've let themselves go' (i.e. physically, morally), or 'to let oneself': *ella no se deja tratar mal* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'she doesn't let herself be mistreated', *se dejaba engañar* '(s)he let herself/himself be fooled'. This is not *se de matización* and is common everywhere.

30.7.14 *Desayunar/desayunarse*

Desayunar is nowadays overwhelmingly the more common form in Spain and may be intransitive or transitive: *desayuno fruta y cereales* 'I have fruit and cereals for breakfast', *¿a qué hora desayunaste?* 'what time did you have breakfast?' The older form *desayunarse con* does, however, occur in Spain, *me desayuno con fruta* 'I have fruit for breakfast'. *Desayunarse* is widespread – but not universal – in Latin America: *desayúnese con nosotros* (advertisement, Ur.) 'have breakfast with us', *quienes tengan la fortuna de desayunarse hoy lunes un par de huevitos con jamón* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'those who are lucky enough to breakfast today, Monday, on a couple of eggs with ham' (but *desayunar* alone is common in Mexico).

30.7.15 *Despertar/despertarse*

Despertar is used transitively: *me despertó la tormenta* 'the storm woke me up', *desperté al vecino* 'I woke up the neighbour'. Either form can be used intransitively, the non-pronominal form being much more common: (*me*) *desperté a las cinco* 'I woke up at five o'clock', *lo metieron en la cama sin que él se despertara* (AC, Mex.), 'they put him to bed without him waking up', *has tenido pesadillas y has despertado llorando* (EP, Mex., dialogue) 'you've had nightmares and you've woken up crying', *. . . donde se había instalado Anita con el niño, que todavía se despertaba cada tres horas* (AGr, Sp.) '. . . where Anita had installed herself with the child, who was still waking up every three hours'.

30.7.16 *Encontrar/encontrarse*

The transitive form means 'to find', the pronominal transitive form can be used optionally (but frequently) for 'to find or meet by chance':

Encontré el libro que yo buscaba	I found the book I was searching for
(*Me*) *encontré una moneda de oro*	I found a gold coin
(*Me*) *encontré a Pepe en la calle*	I met Pepe (by chance) in the street
Me encontré con que no me quedaba nada de sal	I found that I didn't have any salt left

Todo el dinero es igual. Yo lo agarro de donde me lo encuentro (AM, Mex., dialogue) Sp. *yo lo cojo/agarro donde lo encuentro*)	All money's the same. I grab it where I find it

The reflexive meaning of *encontrarse*, 'to be found'/'to be located', as in *María se encuentra en España*, 'María's in Spain', is also very common on both continents.

30.7.17 *Enfermar/enfermarse*

Enfermar is used in Spain: *enfermó de bronquitis* '(s)he fell ill with bronchitis'. The pronominal form *enfermarse* is considered popular although it is spreading in informal speech. In Latin America the pronominal form is universal: *el pirulo animal se enfermó de la guatita* (*La Cuarta*, Ch.) 'the super-elegant animal went down with a stomach bug' (refers to a famous model's poodle. In Spain *pirulo = pijo*, *guatita = barriga* or *tripas*). *Camila Naranjo se enfermó con el interrogatorio* (EM, Mex., dialogue) 'Camila Naranjo fell ill because of the interrogation'.

30.7.18 *Esperar/esperarse*

Esperar translates 'to wait for'. Both *esperar* and *esperarse* are used for 'to expect' and 'to wait' although the non-pronominal form is more frequently seen:

¿(A) qué estás esperando?	What are you waiting for?
Te estamos esperando	We're waiting for you
No me esperaba este 5–0 (*Terra*, Col.)	I wasn't expecting this 5–0 win (in soccer)
Hay que esperar(*se*) *a que te atiendan*	One has to wait to be served
No es lo que uno se espera, perdone (JM, Sp., dialogue)	Sorry, but it isn't what one expects . . .
Buscan vida en otros planetas esperando encontrar seres como nosotros (MC, Mex., dialogue)	They're searching for life on other planets hoping to find beings like us

(1) *Espera/espere* and *espérate/espérese* seem to be interchangeable in the imperative and the pronominal imperative is common everywhere.

30.7.19 *Estar/estarse*

Estar means 'to be', and its use is discussed in Chapter 33. The pronominal form *estarse* is used:

(**a**) Optionally, but usually, to form the imperative of *estar*: *¡estate quieto!* 'sit still!', *¡estese tranquilo!* 'stay calm!/don't worry!' See 21.2.6 for details.

(**b**) To express obligatory or deliberate being in a place. The translation is usually 'to stay':

Antes se estaba usted en la finca, y nosotras aquí tranquilitas (ABV, Sp., dialogue)	You used to stay on the estate, and we women were so peaceful here
Me estuve estudiando toda la noche (from María Moliner. Not 'studying myself'!)	I stayed up all night studying
He tenido que estar(*me*) *a la cola todo el día*	I had to queue/US stand in line all day
Y aquí que se esté para lo que se ofrezca (AM, Mex., dialogue. In Spain *y que se esté aquí para lo que sea*)	And let him remain here in case anything turns up

Quedarse would have been possible for *estarse* in all these examples.

30.7.20 *Ganar/ganarse*

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:

(*Se*) *gana diez mil euros al mes*	(S)he earns 10,000 euros every month
Ellos saben que yo me gano la vida trabajando por ahí con los campesinos (*Río Negro*, Arg.) *Ganarse la vida* is a set phrase)	They know I earn my living working out there with the country folk
Se gana el cariño de todos	(S)he gains/wins everybody's affection
Nos ganó cien mil pesos al póker	(S)he won 100,000 pesos off us at poker
Muy pronto se ganó la confianza del secretario del Tesoro (JV, Mex.)	He very soon won the trust of the secretary of the Treasury

30.7.21 *Imaginar/imaginarse*

Imaginar is a transitive verb meaning 'to conceive of'/'invent a new idea'. *Imaginarse* means 'imagine' in the sense of 'suppose', 'guess' or 'picture':

Imaginó un nuevo modo de hacerlo	(S)he thought of a new way of doing it
Te puedes imaginar lo que yo estaba pensando	You can imagine what I was thinking
Me los imagino divirtiéndose	I imagine them amusing themselves
En contra de lo que yo me imaginaba, no cuenta siquiera con banda ancha (JV, Mex., dialogue)	Contrary to what I imagined, it doesn't even have broadband

(1) *Figurarse* means the same as *imaginarse*: *me figuro que ya se ha marchado* 'I guess he must have gone already'. The non-pronominal form means 'to figure as an item': *no figura en el índice* 'it doesn't appear in the index'.

30.7.22 *Llevar/llevarse*

Llevar means 'to wear', 'to take' or 'to carry'. *Llevarse* means 'to take away':

Voy a llevar el traje a la tintorería	I'm going to take my suit to the cleaner
No se te olvide llevarte los libros	Don't forget to take the books with you
Llevaba un abrigo negro	She was wearing a black coat
Trae que te lleve ese paquete (*trae* is here a colloquial interjection in Spain)	Here, let me carry that parcel for you
La crisis se llevó lo poco que quedaba (*Río Negro*, Arg.)	The crisis took away the little that was left
No se lleva mi basura si no le doy una lana semanal (GZ, Mex. dialogue. *Lana* = *dinero* in familiar Mexican Spanish)	He won't take my rubbish/trash away if I don't give him some money every week

(1) For *llevar* in time phrases, as in *llevo horas aquí* 'I've been here for hours', see 36.3.1. *Llevar* has many uses which should be sought in a good dictionary.

30.7.23 *Mejorar/mejorarse*

Mejorar as a transitive verb means 'to make better', as an intransitive verb it means 'to get better'. *Mejorarse* optionally means 'to get better' from an illness, but *mejorar* alone is usual in written language for other kinds of improvement. *Mejorarse* is much used for best wishes about health and is common everywhere to judge by the texts of electronic greeting-cards:

La situación ha mejorado	The situation has improved
Se encuentra bien y mejora cada día (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	He feels fine and is improving every day
¡Mejórate pronto!/¡Que te mejores pronto!	Get well soon!

(1) In the following sentence *mejorarse* is not *se de matización* but passive *se*: *piden que se mejore el servicio de recogida de animales abandonados* 'they are requesting that the service for collecting abandoned animals should be improved'.

30.7.24 *Morir/morirse*

Both translate 'to die', but the pronominal form normally denotes natural death, especially, but not exclusively, a gradual death and is less formal: *mi madre se murió de cáncer* 'my mother died of cancer'. *Morir* is generally used for accidental or deliberate death: *murió en un accidente de avión* '(s)he died in a plane accident'. In formal written Spanish, *morir* is used for all kinds of death. In colloquial Spanish *morirse* is especially used for the death of relatives and friends:

Ha muerto el primer ministro (formal style)	The Prime Minister has died
La propia Tránsito Arias se murió convencida de que . . . (GGM, Col.)	Tránsito Arias herself died convinced that . . .
Los iban a abandonar en el desierto, para que se murieran de sol y de hambre (MS, Mex. dialogue)	They were going to abandon them in the desert so they died from sun and hunger
Se moría Franco, surgía, por fin, un momento de prometedora incertidumbre en el país (RC, Sp.)	Franco was dying, at last a moment of promising uncertainty was dawning in the country (refers to General Franco)

(1) *Morirse* is used figuratively: *me muero de ganas de ver a mi familia* 'I'm dying to see my family', *me muero de nervios* (EM, Mex., dialogue) 'I'm so nervous I could die'.

(2) *Fallecer* is much used in formal styles for 'to die': *se fingió enfermo de muerte y pidió que antes de fallecer le permitieran casarse con la muchacha* (JA, Mex.) 'he pretended to be fatally sick and he asked them to let him marry the girl before he died'.

30.7.25 *Ocurrir/ocurrirse*

Ocurrir means 'to happen'. *Ocurrírsele a alguien algo* means 'to occur to one', 'to have a sudden idea':

Esto lleva ocurriendo desde hace algún tiempo	This has been happening for some time
Que me cuente cualquier idea que se le ocurra (LS, Sp., dialogue)	Get him to tell me about any idea that he may have
Se les ocurrió tocar la puerta de las habitaciones del hotel a las tres de la mañana (*La Reforma*, Mex.)	They had the idea of knocking on the hotel-room doors at 3 a.m.

30.7.26 *Olvidar/olvidarse(de)/olvidársele algo a uno*

The verb means 'to forget' and there are four possibilities: *olvidar algo*, *olvidarse algo*, *olvidarse de algo* and *olvidársele algo a alguien*.

(**a**) ***Olvidar*** and ***olvidarse de***. When deliberate trying to forget is implied, the first form is rather formal and is usually replaced in colloquial styles by *olvidarse de*: *no puedo olvidarla/no puedo olvidarme de ella* 'I can't forget her', *. . . tratando de olvidarse del dolor, casi desmayado* (GZ, Mex.) 'trying to forget the pain, almost fainting'.

(**b**) ***Olvidar*** and ***olvidársele a uno.*** For absent-minded or accidental forgetting *olvidar* and *olvidársele* can be used, the former again being rather formal: *he olvidado mi agenda/se me olvidó la agenda* 'I've forgotten my diary', *se le olvidaban los otros compromisos, se le olvidaba todo menos ella* (GGM, Col.) 'he forgot his other commitments, he forgot about everything except her', *no se te olvide que me debes respeto* (EM, Mex., dialogue) 'don't forget you owe me respect'. In the latter construction, which is very common, *olvidarse* is not *se de matización* but a passive *se* and the verb agrees in number with the thing forgotten: *se me olvid**aron** las flores* 'I forgot the flowers' (lit. 'the flowers forgot themselves "on" me').

(**c**) ***Olvidarse algo*** (without the *de*) is colloquial and is censured by some grammarians, including Manuel Seco. The DPD recommends avoiding it, but notes that it has a long history and it is in fact very common in everyday speech, *me olvidé la contraseña*, i.e. *se me olvidó la contraseña* or *olvidé la contraseña* for 'I forgot the password'.

30.7.27 *Oscurecer/oscurecerse*

The pronominal form means 'to get darker' (e.g. colours, light). *este amarillo se ha oscurecido* 'this yellow has got darker', *el cielo se oscureció* 'the sky darkened', *los mayas se sentían atemorizados cuando el sol se oscurecía parcialmente* (www.yucatan.com, Mex.) 'the Mayas felt terrified when the Sun was partially darkened'. The non-pronominal form may have the special meaning of 'to grow dark' (i.e. at dusk): *está oscureciendo* 'night is falling'/'it's growing dark', *al oscurecer, los viejos sacaban sillas a las banquetas para ver pasar la vida* (ES, Mex.) 'at nightfall the old men brought chairs out onto the sidewalks/pavements to watch life passing by' (*banqueta = acera* in Spain, *vereda* in Argentina, *andén* in Colombia). *Oscurecer* may also be used transitively for 'to make dark': *. . . el terror que oscureció la mirada de la florista cuando se despidió de mí* (AGr, Sp.) '. . . the terror that darkened the florist's face (lit 'gaze') when she said goodbye to me'.

30.7.28 *Parar/pararse*

Parar is used transitively: *para el motor* 'turn off the engine'. Used intransitively, both *parar* and *pararse* translate 'to stop' on both continents but they are not usually interchangeable. The non-pronominal form indicates scheduled or planned halts, e.g. buses at bus-stops, trains in stations: *el tren expreso para en Montera* 'the express train stops at Montera'. The pronominal form suggests unexpected stops, i.e. at traffic lights or because of breakdown: *el motor se ha parado* 'the motor's stopped', *me tuve que parar en un semáforo* 'I had to stop at the lights'. When the subject is human, the pronominal form often suggests that the subject is personally moving, i.e. walking or running, while the non-pronominal form suggests that (s)he is driving a car: *me paré delante de la tienda* 'I paused/stopped in front of the shop/store', *paré delante de la tienda* 'I stopped (the car) outside the shop/store'.

(1) In Latin America but not in Spain, *pararse*, as well as meaning 'to stop', is much used to mean 'to stand up' (*levantarse* in Spain): *párate derecho* = Sp. *ponte derecho* 'stand up straight', *se acuclilló, luego se paró y se fue; tenía un carro estacionado atrás del almacén* (EM, Mex.) 'he crouched down,

then he stood up and left; he had a car parked behind the store' (in Spain *carro = coche*, *se paró = se levantó*, *atrás de = detrás de*).

30.7.29 *Parecer/parecerse*

Parecer means 'to seem', *parecerse a* means 'to look like': *parece cansada*, 'she seems/looks tired'; *se parecen a su madre* 'they look like their mother', *la película no se parece a ninguna otra* (*¿Qué Pasa?*, Ch.) 'the movie is like no other', *es algo que ni siquiera se parece al sueño* (JV, Mex.) 'it's something that doesn't even seem like sleep', *se parecían bastante, con la misma piel blanca y los mismos ojos de color azul oscuro* (RM, Sp.) 'they were quite like one another, with the same white skin and the same dark blue eyes'.

30.7.30 *Pasar/pasarse*

For the use of these two as verbs of motion, see 30.6.8. *Pasar* also means 'to spend time somewhere' or 'to pass' time:

Miguel pasó la noche en un hotel	Miguel spent the night in a hotel
Pasaron tres horas	Three hours passed

Pasarse means 'to spend time doing something' and also to 'go over the limit':

Los niños se pasan entre mujeres los primeros años de su vida (JM, Sp.)	Children spend the first years of their lives among women
Podíamos pasarnos la vida sin verlos (AM, Mex., dialogue)	We could spend our lives without seeing them
No te pases (*de la raya*)	Don't overdo it/Don't step over the mark

(1) *Pasar un examen* 'to pass an exam' is heard in Latin America and colloquially in Spain, but *aprobar un examen* is more usual in Spain in formal language.

30.7.31 *Perder/perderse*

The non-pronominal form means 'to lose': *en alguna ocasión llegó a perder diez millones de dólares en una sola partida* (JV, Mex.) 'on one occasion he even lost ten million dollars in a single game', *he perdido peso* 'I've lost weight', etc. The pronominal form is used for 'to miss' opportunities, program(me)s, etc. *Bar de Nueva Delhi invita a no perderse lo que podría ser su "última danza"* (*La Jornada*, Mex. refers to rumours of end of world in 2012) 'Delhi bar invites people not to miss what may be their "last dance"', *no se perdía un domingo de carreras, cuando no estaba de viaje* (JM, Sp.) 'he didn't miss a Sunday's racing when he wasn't away travelling'.

However, the non-pronominal form is used for missing transport: *no pierdas el tren/el búho* 'don't miss the train/night bus' (young people in Spain call night buses *búhos* or 'owls'), *vamos para La Gomera. Ya casi perdemos el barco* (LS, Sp., dialogue) 'we're going to La Gomera. At this rate we'll miss the boat'.

The reflexive form *perderse* means 'to get lost'.

30.7.32 *Probar/probarse*

Probar means 'to prove', 'to test', 'to sample': *prueba este vino* 'try this wine', *eso no prueba nada* 'that proves nothing', *hacía tiempo que apenas probaba el café* (RC, Sp.) 'he had barely tasted coffee for ages'. The pronominal form is used for the special meaning 'to try on': *se pasa horas en las tiendas probándose todo* '(s)he spends hours in the stores trying on everything', *la mejor hora para probarse zapatos es por la tarde o durante la noche* (*Impulso*, Mex.) 'the best time to try on shoes is in the evening or at night'.

30.7.33 *Quedar* and *quedarse*

This constantly used verb has numerous meanings and there are regional variations.

- ***Quedar only*** In the following cases only the non-pronominal form is used:

(a) 'To agree' on some plan of action

Quedamos en ir al cine	We agreed to go to the cinema
Habían quedado de verse (EM, Mex.)	They had agreed to meet
Conseguí su teléfono, le llamé, quedamos (JC, Sp.)	I got his phone number, called him, we agreed to meet
Quedamos en que no íbamos a mencionar el pacto (ES, Mex., dialogue)	We agreed we weren't going to mention the agreement
Habían quedado en que sólo trabajaría hasta esa hora. (CP, Arg.)	They'd agreed that she would only work until that time ('hour')

(b) 'To be left' as in 'there are only three sandwiches left'

La cabeza me la he tenido que lavar con el poco champú que quedaba en la botella (CRG, Sp.)	I had to wash my hair (lit. 'head') with the few drops of shampoo left in the bottle
Y luego sólo él quedó vivo (EM, Mex.)	And he was the only one left alive
Queda por ver . . .	It remains to be seen
Soy un viejo y no me queda mucho tiempo (EP, Mex., dialogue)	I'm an old man and I haven't got much time left
No me queda otra alternativa	I have no other alternative

(c) As an equivalent of *estar* when referring to location

¿Dónde quedaba México exactamente? ¿Junto a Perú? (ES, Mex., dialogue)	Where *was* Mexico exactly? Next to Peru?
Pudimos llegar al lugar del crimen antes de que expirase el ultimátum de la juez. No quedaba lejos de la carretera. (LS, Sp.)	We managed to get to the crime scene before the judge's ultimatum expired. It wasn't far from the road
¿La Plaza del Rey dónde queda?	Where is the Plaza del Rey?
Queda bastante lejos	It's quite a long way away

- ***Quedarse* only**. In the following cases (**d–f**) only the pronominal form is used

(d) To mean 'to stay' or 'to remain' or 'to go on doing' something'

Se quedaron en el Hotel Continental	They stayed in the Hotel Continental
Yo me quedé de pie ante él (CMG, Sp.)	I remained standing in front of him

Se quedó quieto, escuchando las voces de la calle (EM, Mex.)	He remained motionless, listening to the voices in the street
Por no salir a tiempo hombre se quedó encerrado en un banco (headline, *Terra*, Col., Sp. ***un*** *hombre se quedó . . .*)	Man locked in bank after failing to leave in time
Los últimos tiempos él se quedaba toda la semana, solo, con las persianas bajas (CP, Arg.)	Lately he was staying alone for the whole week with the blinds drawn
quedarse dormido/quedarse mirando (both very common phrases)	to go to sleep/to stare at
Mi retrato se quedó a medio esbozar	My portrait remained half sketched

(**e**) **To mean 'to keep', as in 'keep the book, I don't need it'**

Quédese la vuelta	Keep the change
Te lo puedes quedar si lo necesitas	You can keep it if you need it
El carro se lo quedaron los federales (EM, Mex., dialogue. *El carro = el coche*)	The 'feds' (*Policía Federal*) kept the car
Pero no podía tomarse el atrevimiento de quedársela (CP, Arg.).	But she couldn't dare to keep it

(**f**) **Colloquially, probably only in Spain, to mean 'to tease'/'to wind up'**

Menos mal que sé que te estás quedando conmigo (LS, Sp., dialogue)	It's a good thing that I know you're winding me up

The noun associated with this use of the verb is *una quedada*, as in *yo no me daba cuenta de que era una quedada suya* 'I didn't realize it was one of his/her wind-ups'.

• **Overlap between *quedar and quedarse***

Very often either *quedar* or *quedarse* can be used to indicate a change of state.

(**g**) **With living subjects, to indicate a change of state** often involving some sort of loss, injury or inconvenience, but often simply some new state. In these examples, *quedarse* or *quedar* could be used, *quedar* probably being more usual – at least outside the Madrid area. The Academy thinks that in this context *quedar* is slightly more formal than *quedarse*.

(*Se*) *quedó cojo/sordo/calvo*	He became lame/blind/deaf/bald
Una mañana se despertó en la habitación de su hotel y no vio nada. Se había quedado ciego (RB, Ch.)	One morning he woke in his hotel room and could see nothing. He had gone blind.
(*Se*) *quedó descolocada*	She was 'thrown'/disconcerted
Sí. Y me quedé embarazada, si eso es a lo que se refiere (LS, Sp., dialogue)	Yes. And I got pregnant, if that's what you're referring to
Todo el mundo quedaría admirado (LR, Col)	Everyone would be surprised
Los hombres la veían y quedaban hipnotizados (EM, Mex.)	Men saw her and were hypnotized
Los hombres que carezcan de un acceso completo e instantáneo al Internet quedarán rezagados (EP, Mex., dialogue; presumably refers to women as well)	Men who don't have total and instantaneous access to the Internet will be left behind

If the state arising is temporary, the form *quedarse* is more likely: *se quedó cubierto de pintura* 'he was covered in paint', *se quedó boquiabierta* 'she was flabbergasted', but *quedó viuda* 'she was

widowed', *la primera ministra quedó debilitada por el resultado de las elecciones* ' the prime minister was weakened by the election result'. *La gente se quedó paralizada* 'people remained paralyzed' suggests with shock, amazement or fear; . . . *quedó paralizada* suggests a physical handicap. *Don Joaquín se estaba quedando calvo* (EP, Mex.) 'don Joaquín was going bald' is not the same as *Don Joaquín ha quedado calvo* '. . . has gone bald'. Nevertheless, *se quedó viuda*, *se quedó debilitada*, *quedó boquiabierta* are also acceptable.

(h) Changes of state with non-living subjects. *Quedar* tends to indicate a result or a long-lasting condition and *quedarse* an event which does not necessarily have a lasting result:

The following sentence refers to a short-term state: *el coche se quedó averiado en medio de la calle pero pudimos arreglarlo en seguida* 'the car broke down in the middle of the road but we were able to fix it immediately'. The non-pronominal form suggests an on-going state and since *en seguida* suggests it was not on-going, the following sentence is contradictory: ?*el coche quedó averiado en medio de la calle pero pudimos arreglarlo en seguida*. Likewise **se queda prohibido* for *queda prohibido* is incorrect. The following examples refer to states, usually long-lasting ones:

El pueblo quedó destruido a causa de la inundación	The town/village was destroyed because of the flood
Quiero que este punto quede claro	I want this point to be clear
Ahora que lo hemos pintado, el dormitorio queda realmente bien	Now we've painted it, the bedroom looks really good
Queda feo que duermas hasta que te ponga el plato en la mesa, te lo zampes y luego te largues (LS, Sp., dialogue)	It really doesn't look nice if you sleep until she puts your plate on the table, then you gobble it down and then leave
. . . por no exponerme a que mi carrera quedase truncada por un bobo delito contra la seguridad vial (ibid.)	. . . so as not to expose myself to my career being cut short because of a stupid road safety offence
Tenía una personalidad de insecto que había quedado fielmente plasmada en su foto de bodas (ES, Mex.)	He had an insect-like personality that was faithfully reflected in his wedding photo
Ahora que lo he corregido queda mucho mejor	Now I've corrected it it's much better

The following sentences suggest short-lived events, but examples like these are not very common:

Mi pelo se quedó azul (temporary, we assume)	My hair turned/went blue
Hasta que su revólver se quedó sin balas (MVLl, Pe.)	Until his revolver ran out of bullets
Primero el líquido se queda verde, luego se queda negro	First the liquid turns green, then it turns black

This pronominal use is easily confused with the examples at **(d)** as in *se me quedó grabado cómo trataban a mi madre* (EP, Mex., dialogue) 'I couldn't forget (lit. 'it remained engraved on me') how they were treating my mother', *el salón se quedó medio vacío* (ES, Mex.) 'the room was left half empty', *el perfume de Mariana se quedó impregnado en las vestiduras como un recordatorio de mi cobardía* (ibid.) 'Mariana's perfume remained clinging to my clothes as a reminder of my cowardice'. *Quedarse* in these contexts suggests the start of a condition, *quedar* the subsequent result.

(1) There is some overlap with *quedar* and *resultar* in sentences like *ahora que han restaurado la catedral resulta/queda impresionante* 'now they've restored the cathedral it looks impressive'. See 32.2.6.

30.7.34 *Reír/reírse*

Both mean 'to laugh'. *Reírse* is the more common form in speech, *reír* is much used in writing. However *reírse* implies spontaneous laughter, so it is not used when the cause of merriment comes from outside, as in *el gas me hizo reír* 'the gas made me laugh', *me estoy ahogando, cállate, no me hagas reír más* (RC, Sp., dialogue) 'I'm choking, shut up, don't make me laugh any more':

Se rio de su propia risa (GGM, Col. See note 1)	She laughed at her own laughter
Todos se rieron de él	They all laughed at him
Consiguió dejar de reírse y retomar la conversación (MS, Mex.)	He managed to stop laughing and pick up the conversation again
Reí y me senté en un banco de madera frente a su escritorio (JV, Mex.)	I laughed and sat down on a wooden bench in front of his desk

(1) The spelling *rio* for *rió* is now recommended by the Academy. See 44.2.4.

30.7.35 *Temer/temerse*

Temer usually means 'to be afraid' in the literal sense of 'to fear', especially with a direct object; *temerse* can mean the same, but often simply means 'to suspect', 'to be worried that'. See 20.3.18.

30.7.36 *Traer/traerse*

Traer is the normal and overwhelmingly the most common word for 'to bring', but it seems to us that in modern colloquial speech *traerse* is increasingly used with the same meaning as *traer*, cf. *trae a tu marido/tráete a tu marido* 'bring your husband with you', *y tráete a los otros a mi casa* (MVLl, Pe., dialogue) 'and bring the others to my house', *llevas años retirada, y de repente matas a un vigilante y te traes a casa a un fugitivo* 'you've been retired for years, and you suddenly kill a security guard and bring home someone who's on the run' (JN, Sp., dialogue), *si quiere usted traerse su bloque de taquigrafía* (CF, Mex. dialogue. Spain *bloc de taquigrafía*) 'would you mind bringing your shorthand pad?'

(1) *Traer* can also mean 'to wear' *traía/llevaba un traje precioso* 'she was wearing a lovely suit/dress', *toda la ropa que traía* (JV, Mex.) 'all the clothes he was wearing'. In Spain *llevar* is more frequent in this meaning.

(2) *Traerse* is used in phrases implying shady or strange business: *yo creo que no es por ella, sino por su tío y los asuntos que os traéis entre manos* (JM, Sp., dialogue) 'I think it isn't because of her but her uncle and the things you're getting up to between you', *¿qué se traen entre manos las grandes de la tecnología de la información?* (*El Universal*, Ven.) 'what are the big IT companies up to?', *¿quién sabe qué se trae? Yo creo que no anda bien de la cabeza* (JP, Mex., dialogue) 'who knows what he's up to? I think he isn't right in the head'.

30.7.37 *Vestir/vestirse*

Vestir is used for the transitive meaning: *la madre vistió al niño* 'the mother put the child's clothes on', *vestía a las modelos con ropa absurda* '(s)he dressed the models in absurd clothes', *vestía una camisa estampada y jeans azules* (EM, Mex. In Spain *jeans* = *vaqueros*) 'he was wearing a printed shirt and blue jeans'. Used intransitively, *vestir* means 'to wear' or 'to dress' (intransitive) and *vestirse* means 'to get dressed':

Vestía como lo haría una ejecutiva un viernes de ropa informal (LS, Sp.)	She dressed like a female executive at a casual-dress Friday party
¿Vestía de rosa con frecuencia? (MS, Mex., dialogue)	Did she often wear pink?

Tampoco ese día se vestirá ni saldrá a buscar trabajo (LR, Col.)
That day too he won't get dressed or go out to look for work

No se vestía para los hombres ni se ponía joyas ni perfumes (RM, Sp.)
She didn't get dressed up for men or put on jewellery/US jewelry or perfumes

30.8 *Se de matización* in Latin America

Most of the uses of *se de matización* heard in Spain are also found in Latin America, but a few constructions accepted there sound strange to Spaniards. The following selection, not exhaustive, includes verbs discussed elsewhere, and not all the forms are current in educated speech in every republic. European equivalents are shown in brackets:

crecerse to be brought up (*criarse*)
desayunarse to have breakfast (*desayunar*)
desconfiarse not to trust (*desconfiar*)
devolverse to return (not in River Plate area, *volverse*)
enfermarse to get ill/US sick (*enfermar*)
heredarse to inherit (*heredar*); see note 1
lloverse to leak (of roofs: rural Argentina)
prestarse to borrow; see note 2
recordarse remember (*recordar*, *acordarse*: see 22.2.2, note 4)
regresarse to return (*volverse*)
robarse to steal (*robar*)
soñarse con to dream of (*soñar con*)
tardarse to be late (*tardar*)
verse to look (*parecer*)/to seem: see note **3**
vomitarse to vomit (*vomitar*, *devolver*)

(1) In some parts of Latin America, e.g. Mexico, *heredar* can mean 'to leave to someone in a will' (Spain *dejar*): *estaba seguro de su alcurnia y pudo heredársela entera a su hija* (AM, Mex., Sp. *pudo dejársela entera*) 'he was sure of his pedigree and managed to bequeath it intact to his daughter'.

(2) In Argentina the popular word for 'to borrow' is *emprestar*. This verb is heard in Spain and elsewhere, but it is considered sub-standard. The standard form is *pedir prestado. Prestar* is 'to lend' or, colloquially, *dejar*.

(3) In Latin America *verse* is used to refer to personal appearance: *te ves muy guapa* (AM, Mex., dialogue; Sp. *estás muy guapa*, *se te ve muy guapa*) 'you look very pretty', *y tú no te ves nada mal con esa tenida* (SV, Ch., dialogue: Sp. *no estás nada mal*; *la tenida = el traje*) 'and you don't look at all bad in that outfit', *Véase y siéntase bien alimentándose correctamente* (Latin-American book title) 'Look and feel good by eating properly'. *Yo me veo bien con esta ropa* 'I look okay in these clothes' is possible in Spain.

30.9 Pronominal verbs of consumption, perception, knowledge

One function of the pronominal form of some transitive verbs in colloquial language is to emphasize the unusual or surprising nature of some act of consuming, perceiving or knowing. Thus one says *como pizza* 'I eat pizza' (no quantity specified), but optionally – though usually – ***me*** *comí una pizza* 'I ate a whole pizza'. The verb must have a direct object which must refer to a specific item or quantity:

Se *bebió de un trago su tequila* (GZ, Mex.)
He downed his tequila in one gulp

Nos *liquidamos las dos un par de Viña Tondonias y* ***nos*** *comimos un par de bolsas King size de patatas fritas* (CRG, Sp.)
The two of us women finished off a couple of bottles of Viña Tondonia and ate a couple of king-size bags of crisps/US chips

(*Se*) *fuma tres paquetes al día*	(S)he smokes three packs a day
(*Me*) *anduve cincuenta kilómetros*	I walked 50 km
(*Me*) *aprendí todo el capítulo en una hora*	I learned the whole chapter in an hour
¿(*Te*) *sabes los verbos irregulares?*	Do you know the irregular verbs?
(*Me*) *conozco Valencia de cabo a rabo*	I know Valencia inside out
Tómate/toma un somnífero	Take a sleeping pill
(*Se*) *lo ha tragado*	(S)he's swallowed it
(*Se*) *vio todo el museo en diez minutos*	(S)he saw the whole museum in ten minutes
Vas a tener que releerte las obras completas [de Shakespeare] CF, Mex., dialogue)	You're going to have to re-read the complete works [of Shakespeare]
Piénsatelo	Think it through (completely/thoroughly)
Se gasta todo lo que gana	(S)he spends everything (s)he earns

30.10 Interpretation of pronominal verbs with inanimate subjects

As we have remarked before, a third-person pronominal verb may also be interpreted as passive in meaning: *se construyó en España* means the same as *fue construido en España* 'it was built in Spain' (see 32.4 for more details).

A difficulty therefore sometimes arises with sentences containing pronominal verbs, for example *se abrió la puerta.* Is this to be understood as intransitive, i.e. 'the door opened', or passive, 'the door **was** opened'? Likewise, does *se hundió el barco* mean 'the boat sank' or 'the boat was sunk'? This problem only arises with certain verbs which have well-established pronominal intransitive forms, e.g. *abrir/abrirse* 'to open', *cerrar/cerrarse* 'to close', *encontrar/encontrarse* 'to find'/'to be located' and others which will be found in good dictionaries. Most transitive verbs, e.g. *construir* 'to build', *derribar* 'to fell', do not have intransitive counterparts so confusion is hardly possible.

One way of 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 pronominal 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:

La luz se enciende a las nueve	The light comes on at nine
Se enciende la luz a las nueve	The light is lit/comes on at nine
Tres ventanas se rompieron durante la tormenta	Three windows broke in the storm
Se rompieron tres ventanas durante la manifestación	Three windows were broken in the demonstration

30.11 Obligatory use of *uno* as an impersonal pronoun with pronominal verbs

Important: *uno/una* must be used to give an impersonal meaning to a third-person pronominal verb since two *se*s can never appear side by side. One can never say **se se enfada/enoja mucho* for *uno/una se enfada/enoja mucho* 'one gets very angry' (*enojarse* is more typical of Latin America):

Se moría de frío en esa casa (*morirse*)	(S)he/It was/You were dying of cold in that house
Se moría ***uno*** *de frío en esa casa*	One died from the cold in that house

Cuando está así, se irrita fácilmente por cualquier cosa	When (s)he's like that, (s)he easily gets irritated over anything
*Cuando se/uno está así, **uno** se irrita fácilmente por cualquier cosa*	When one is like that, one gets easily irritated over anything
Con estas cosas se cansa mucho	(S)he gets very tired with these things
*Con estas cosas **uno** se cansa mucho*	One gets very tired with these things
A veces una se equivoca de método (ES, Mex. dialogue)	Sometimes one gets the method wrong
A esa edad uno se siente más vulnerable y desprotegido que nunca. (JV, Mex.)	At that age one feels more vulnerable and unprotected than ever
Cuando una se lava las manos en los aeropuertos quedan bastante más limpias pero arrugaditas (MB, Ur., little girl speaking)	When one washes one's hands at airports they come out quite a lot cleaner but all wrinkly

For more details about the pronoun *uno* see 32.7.1.

31 Verbs of becoming

Matters discussed in this chapter are:

- Verbs like *cansarse*, *indignarse*, *aumentar*, etc. (Section 31.2)
- *Ponerse* (Section 31.3.1)
- *Volverse* (Section 31.3.2)
- *Hacerse* (Section 31.3.3)
- *Llegar/pasar a ser* (Section 31.3.4)
- *Convertirse en* (Section 31.3.5)
- *Quedar*(*se*) (Section 31.3.6)
- *Resultar* (Section 31.3.7)
- *Devenir* (Section 31.3.8)

31.1 General

There are two main ways in Spanish of expressing the idea of 'to become': either use one of the many verbs derived from adjectives to indicate a change of state, e.g. *enfermó* (Lat. Am. *se enfermó*) '(s)he became ill/sick', *se entusiasmaron* 'they became enthusiastic', *nos alegramos* 'we became happy', *quiero adelgazar* 'I want to lose weight'/'become slimmer'; or use one of the several verbs that mean 'to become', e.g. *ponerse*, *volverse*, *hacerse*, *llegar a ser*, *convertirse en*, *quedarse*. One can therefore also say *se puso enfermo* 'he became ill/sick', *se puso/se quedó contento* 'he became contented/happy', *se volvió loco* 'he went mad', etc.

31.2 Verbs denoting change of state

These are numerous in Spanish. Many of them are pronominal verbs (the term is explained in Chapter 30). The following is a small selection:

aburrirse (*de*) to get bored
alegrarse (*de*) to become happy
asustarse (*de*) to get frightened
cansarse (*de*) to get tired
deprimirse to get depressed
divertirse to enjoy oneself
endurecerse to become hard
enfadarse (Lat. Am. *enojarse*) to get angry
enloquecer(*se*) to go mad
enrojecer to go red/to blush
extrañarse (*de*) to be puzzled
envejecer to grow old
fastidiarse to get annoyed
indignarse to get indignant
irritarse (*por*) to get irritated
marearse to feel sick
molestarse (*por*) to be bothered
vaciarse to become empty

(1) As *enrojecer* shows, not all verbs that express changes of state are pronominal: *enloquecer* is more common for 'to go mad' than *enloquecerse*. Some other common cases of non-pronominal verbs denoting 'to become . . .'/'to get . . .' are shown at 30.4.1.

(2) *Amanecer* 'to dawn', can be used with living subjects: *amanecí detestando mi color de pelo, mis ojeras, mi estatura* (AM, Mex., dialogue) 'I woke up (lit. 'I dawned') hating the colour of my hair, the bags under my eyes, my height', *amaneció sin ánimos para levantarse* (LR, Col.) 'he woke (lit. 'dawned') not feeling like getting up', *nunca amanecí en su casa* (JM, Sp., dialogue) 'I never spent the night (lit. 'dawned') in her house'.

31.3 Verbs meaning 'to become'

Apart from the use of the pronominal forms discussed in the previous section, Spanish resembles English in having several words meaning 'to become': cf. 'to *grow* old', 'to *get* warm', 'to *go* mad', 'to *turn* nasty', 'to *become* happy', etc. French and Italian make much use of one word, *devenir* and *diventare* respectively, but the Spanish verb *devenir* 'to become' is very limited in use. See 31.3.8.

31.3.1 *Ponerse* 'to become', 'to get'

Ponerse is used to indicate changes of mood, physical condition and appearance, voluntary or involuntary, which are usually short-lived, e.g. *ponerse enfermo/frenético/cabizbajo* 'to get ill/frantic/preoccupied', *ponerse contento* 'to become pleased'. It is not used with adjectives that do not allow *estar*: **se puso budista/ateo* 'he became a Buddhist/atheist' is not possible for *se hizo budista/ateo*.

There is a contrast between *se ha puesto muy pesado* 'he's become very annoying' (temporarily) and *se ha vuelto muy pesado* 'he's become a real pain'. There is sometimes overlap with *quedarse*; see 31.3.6, and with *volverse*.

Ponerse can have living subjects and also certain kinds of non-living subjects, e.g. prices, foods, situations and weather conditions.

Cuando se enteró se puso muy contenta/triste/de mal humor/enfadada (*se entristeció*, *se enfadó* could also be used)	When she heard about it she became very happy/sad/bad-tempered/cross
Se puso/Se quedó ronco/Enronqueció de tanto hablar	(S)he got hoarse from talking so much
El FMI se puso duro (*Clarín*, Arg. Sp. *se ha puesto*)	The IMF (International Monetary Fund) has got tough
Se puso/Está mejor/Mejoró de su enfermedad (but not **la enfermedad se puso mejor*)	(S)he got better from his/her illness
¡No te pongas difícil/tonto!	Don't get difficult/silly!
En estos últimos años se me ha puesto el pelo rizado	My hair has got curly in recent years
El tiempo se está poniendo/volviendo frío	The weather is getting cold
. . . una costumbre que se está poniendo de moda entre estos clientes . . . (AC, Mex.)	. . . a custom that's becoming fashionable among these clients

(1) *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!' It may also imply deliberate effort: *mi madre se ha puesto guapa* 'my mother's made herself look attractive'.

(2) *Ponerse a* + infinitive means to begin: *le contaba de mi papá que se puso a bailar conmigo* (ES, Mex., dialogue; Spain *le contaba que mi padre se puso a . . .*) 'I was telling her about my father, who started dancing with me', *nos pusimos a hablar de la muerte* (CRG, Sp.) 'we started talking about death'.

31.3.2 *Volverse*

This usually translates 'to become'/'to go', as in 'to go mad', and often implies changes of belief or commitment when applied to living subjects; these changes may be involuntary and long-lived: *cuán grosero se había vuelto el gringo* (MS, Mex., dialogue) 'how ill-mannered the gringo had become'. It can also be used with non-living subjects: *los arreglos musicales de Pérez Prado se volvieron legendarios* (JA, Mex.) 'Pérez Prado's musical arrangements became legendary'.

The change is felt to be more permanent than with *ponerse*: compare *se puso malhumorada* 'she got into a bad mood' and *se volvió malhumorada* 'she became a grumpy person'.

Con la edad nos vamos volviendo más de derechas	We get more right-wing with age
Me he vuelto alérgico a la lana	I've become allergic to wool
Últimamente todo se vuelven sorpresas (see 2.3.3 for the plural agreement of *vuelven*)	Recently everything has become surprises
¿Dónde se volvió asesino ese chico? (MP, Arg., dialogue)	Where did that boy learn to be a murderer?
La peor pesadilla para una madre en esta época es que sus hijos anuncien que se han vuelto vegetarianos (*Terra*, Ven.)	The worst nightmare for a mother these days is for her children to announce they've become vegetarians
Durante un rato el cielo se volvió anaranjado (AM, Mex., or *se puso*)	The sky turned orange for a while

See 30.6.13 for other meanings of *volver*(*se*).

31.3.3 *Hacerse* 'to become'

When used of people, this often implies voluntary or deliberate changes and it is usual for religious, professional or political conversions, i.e. changes that are more or less lasting. It can also occasionally be used of circumstances:

Se hizo católico/Se convirtió al catolicismo	He became a Catholic
Para hacerte arquitecto necesitas saber dibujo	You need to know how to draw to become an architect
Me hice amigo de mucha gente rica	I made friends with a lot of rich people
¿Qué se hicieron los ídolos? (*La Prensa*, Pan., Sp. . . . *se hizo de los ídolos* . . .)	What became of (our) idols/heroes?
Emigró a México, se hizo inmensamente rico (AGa, Sp.)	He emigrated to Mexico and became immensely rich
. . . cuando Isabel se hizo novia de Esteban (JP, Mex., dialogue)	. . . when Isabel became Esteban's girlfriend
. . . como volutas de humo que se hace progresivamente más espeso (CMG, Sp.)	. . . like spirals of smoke growing progressively thicker
Las noches se hacen más largas	The nights are getting longer
Se me hace cuesta arriba tener que levantarme temprano	It's turning into a chore (lit 'uphill') for me to have to get up early

(1) The *NGLE* 38.2c notes that if an adjective can be used with *estar* but not with *ser*, it cannot take *hacerse*: *se deprimió* '(s)he became depressed', not **se hizo . . .*; likewise with *contento*, *descontento*, *irritado*, *enfadado/enojado*, *desnudo*, etc.

(2) There is no difference between sentences like *se está haciendo cada vez más vago* and *se está volviendo cada vez más vago/perezoso* 'he's getting lazier and lazier' even though they do not necessarily suggest voluntary choices. But *se hizo socialista* 'he became a socialist' implies a deliberate commitment, unlike *se volvió socialista* 'he became socialist (in outlook/attitude)'.

(3) Idioms: *hacerse tarde* 'to get late', *hacerse de miel* 'to become so soft that people can take advantage of one', *hacerse humo* 'to vanish' (lit. 'to become smoke'); *no te hagas el tonto* 'stop pretending you don't understand', *hacerse viral* 'to go viral'.

(4) 'To become' with the meaning of 'to be appointed' is translated into Spanish as *nombrar* or *hacer*: *lo/le han nombrado/hecho ministro* 'he's become a Minister'.

31.3.4 *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'. It is only occasionally used with non-living subjects, as in *la situación llegó a ser imposible* 'the situation (eventually) became impossible':

Trabajó mucho y con el tiempo llegó a ser alguien/director general/una persona importante	He worked hard and in due time he became someone/general manager/an important person
Pretendía, con el tiempo, llegar a Jefe de la Interpol (ES, Mex., dialogue)	He aimed eventually to become head of Interpol

Pasar a (*ser*) means 'to go on to be' but 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
Pasó a ser uno de los partidos políticos del mundo con el porcentaje más alto de afiliados (*La República*, Ur.)	It became one of the world's political parties with the highest percentage of members
De hija pasé a ser esposa (CRG, Sp.)	From being a daughter I went on to become a wife
. . . el momento en que Baviera pasó a formar parte del Reich alemán (JV, Mex., dialogue)	. . . the moment when Bavaria became part of the German Reich

31.3.5 *Convertirse en* 'to become/change/turn into'

This verb precedes noun phrases and usually suggests total changes or transformations:

Nada más tocarlo/le el hada con la varita el príncipe se convirtió en rana	As soon as the fairy touched him with her wand, the prince turned into a frog
Tu socarronería ha dejado de ser irónica para convertirse en vitriólica (CMG, Sp., dialogue)	Your sarcasm has stopped being ironic; it's become vitriolic
El golf se convirtió en pasión de multitudes (*Río Negro*, Arg.)	Golf has become a mass craze
La silla se convierte fácilmente en una escalera	The chair turns easily into a step-ladder
Había descendido socialmente hasta convertirse en lo que ahora era (CF, Mex.)	It [an apartment block] had gone downhill socially to become what it was now

(1) 'To convert to' a new belief is *convertirse a* (see also *hacerse*; see 31.3.3): *no todos los que se convierten a una religión se vuelven buenos* 'not everyone who is converted to a religion becomes good'.

31.3.6 *Quedarse* and *quedar*

This verb is discussed in detail at 30.7.33. Its use in passive sentences, e.g. *quedaron detenidos* 'they were arrested' is also discussed at 32.2.6.

31.3.7 *Resultar*

This verb is also discussed at 14.6.3–5. Although it is not really a verb of 'becoming', *resultar* with adjectives and participles expresses a nuance that is related to the idea of change of state, namely that a result or impression is unpredicted or unexpected. This often involves misfortunes, but it can also indicate pleasant surprises:

Pero la rutina del cisne que despierta oyendo el Danubio azul resultó un desastre por culpa del tocadiscos (ES, Mex., dialogue)	But the routine of the swan waking up when it hears the Blue Danube was a disaster because of the record-player
Pero entre tanto disparate hubo uno que resultó mortal: las medias blancas (LR, Col. In Spain *medias* = 'stockings' and 'socks' = *calcetines*)	But among all these stupid blunders there was one that was fatal: white socks
Se notaba que se llevaban muy bien y me resultaban ustedes muy simpáticos (JM, Sp., dialogue)	One could see you got on very well together and I found you very nice
También resultaba mágico lanzar pompas de jabón (EP, Mex.)	It was also magical to blow (lit. 'launch') soap bubbles

(1) For *resultar* in passive sentences, as in *tres personas resultaron heridas* 'three people were injured', see 32.2.6b.

31.3.8 *Devenir*

The verb *devenir* 'to become' is virtually never used in Spain except in philosophical texts. In Latin America it is found in the media: *se hizo conocida como modelo; luego devino actriz popular* (*La Nación*, Arg.), 'she became known as a model; then she became a popular actress', *el caso que empezó como novela televisiva deviene circo mediático*' (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'the case that began like a TV soap opera is turning into a media circus'. The construction *devenir en* 'to turn into' is also found in formal Latin-American Spanish: *la ominosa conspiración militar que devino en el golpe de Estado* (*La República*, Ur.) 'the deplorable/ominous military conspiracy that turned into the Coup d'État [of 1973]'.

32 Passive and impersonal sentences

This chapter covers:

- General remarks on passive and impersonal sentences (Section 32.1)
- The passive with *ser* (Section 32.2)
- *La ciudad fue destruida* and *la ciudad estaba destruida* compared (Section 32.2.5)
- *La pasiva refleja* ('passive *se*') and the passive with *ser*: general (Section 32.3)
- Passive *se* (*pasiva refleja*) (Section 32.4)
- *Se vio a tres personas/Se les vio* (Section 32.5)
- Impersonal *se* (Section 32.6)
- Other impersonal pronouns (*uno/una*, *tú*, *ellos*) (Section 32.7)
- Appendix to Chapter 32: further remarks on *se* + transitive verb + non-living direct objects (Section 32.8)

32.1 General

In **passive sentences** the object of a verb in an active sentence becomes the subject: 'they signed the deal' (active) > 'the deal was signed' (passive). The latter is a type of impersonal sentence, but the agent of the action could be included – 'the deal was signed **by** the manager' – in which case it is passive but no longer impersonal.

In **impersonal sentences** the agent of the action is either unknown or irrelevant, as in 'the fire was started accidentally' (we don't know by whom) or 'they drink vodka in Russia' (the identity of 'they' is irrelevant).

Spanish is rich in passive and impersonal constructions and it is not always easy to distinguish between them. Students who know French may find the comparisons helpful:

Spanish passive and impersonal constructions

Construction	Example	English	French	Section
Passive with *ser*	***el libro fue publicado***	the book was published	*le livre a été publié*	**32.2**
Passive *se*	***se publicó el libro***	the book was published	*le livre s'est publié*	**32.4**
	se bebe vino	wine is drunk	*on boit du vin*	
	se bebe mucho	a lot **of it** is drunk	*on en boit beaucoup*	
'Special construction'	***se recibió a los embajadores***	the ambassadors were received	*les ambassadeurs ont été reçus/on a reçu les ambassadeurs*	**32.5**
	se les recibió	they were received	*on les a reçus/ils ont été reçus*	
Impersonal *se*	***se entra por aquí/se bebe mucho***	one goes in here/people drink a lot	*on entre par ici/on boit beaucoup*	**32.6**

uno/una	***uno/una se cansa uno/una duerme***	one gets tired/one sleeps	*on se fatigue/on dort*	**32.7**
Impersonal *tú* (informal)	***es fácil si sabes inglés***	it's easy if you know English	*c'est facile si on sait anglais*	**32.7.2**
Impersonal 3rd person	***dicen que es verdad***	they say it's true	*on dit que c'est vrai*	**32.7.3**

(1) As the table above shows, Spanish lacks an exact equivalent of the French *on*, German *man*, English 'one'. Medieval Spanish once used *hombre* as an impersonal pronoun, cf. *como hombre es mujer y vieja, no hacen caso de hombre* 'since one's a woman and old, they don't pay one any attention' (from G. Correas, *Vocabulario de refranes y frases populares*, quoted Kany, 1970, 179). When this useful construction died out, some of its functions were transferred to the already overworked pronoun *se*.

32.2 Passive with *ser*

32.2.1 General

The passive with *ser* is formed from the appropriate tense and person of *ser* 'to be' and the past participle, which agrees in number and gender with the subject of *ser*:

Active	**Passive**
Solucionaron los problemas	*Los problemas fueron solucionados*
They solved the problems	The problems were solved
Manuel escribió la respuesta	*La respuesta fue escrita por Manuel*
Manuel wrote the reply	The reply was written by Manuel

There are several points to be made about this construction.

(**a**) The passive with *ser* is common in written Spanish everywhere and it is more common than 100 years ago although it is not a modern invention; but it is much less common in spoken language.

English uses the passive constantly in all styles – 'he was congratulated by the boss', 'my car was damaged by a falling tree', 'you've been conned' – with the result that English-speaking students constantly over-use it in spoken Spanish. The result may not always be ungrammatical, but it may sound pedantic or awkward. Some grammarians go so far as to claim that it is not heard in everyday language, but this is not entirely true, assuming that the following extracts really reflect spontaneous speech:

. . . la mujer "esposa de" que llevas dentro de ti y para lo que ***fuiste educada*** (RM, Sp., dialogue)	. . . the 'wife-woman' that you carry inside you and you were brought up to be
Los derechos de filmación del fin del mundo ya ***fueron vendidos*** *a la televisión norteamericana* (LRS, PR, dialogue)	Film rights for the end of the world have already been sold to US television
Uno viene a estos desayunos para ***ser visto*** *por los demás* (CF, Mex., dialogue)	One comes to these breakfasts to be seen by other people
Tuve la suerte de ser elegida (ES, Mex., dialogue)	I was lucky enough to be chosen
El hijo de Pilar Ternera fue llevado a casa de sus abuelos (GGM, Col., *llevar* cannot form a passive with *ser* if it means 'to wear' or 'to hold')	Pilar Ternera's son was carried to his grandparents' house

Such examples seem more common in the dialogue of Latin-American novels than in Spain. In informal language impersonal 'they' (32.7.3) is more common than the passive, e.g. . . .*y para lo que te educaron*, . . . *para que te vean los demás* . . . .

(**b**) In English an indirect object can become the subject of the verb in a passive sentence: '**she** was sent a letter' = 'a letter was sent to her', '**I** was given a prize' = 'a prize was given to me'. This is a peculiarity of English and it is impossible in Spanish. See 32.2.2a.

(**c**) If no agent is mentioned, the passive with *ser* is often identical in meaning with passive *se* (explained at 32.4): *encontraron dos cargas explosivas que fueron desactivadas* and *encontraron dos cargas explosivas que se desactivaron* both mean 'they found two explosive charges which were defused', although the first is unambiguous whereas the second might conceivably be read as '. . . which defused themselves'. But there is sometimes a difference of nuance which may become crucial. See 32.2.7.

(**d**) The passive with *ser* is more common with the preterite, future, perfect, pluperfect tenses and with the infinitive than with the imperfect, present and continuous tenses: *fue entrevistado ayer* is normal written style for 'he was interviewed yesterday', but *Mario es entrevistado con frecuencia por periodistas de la prensa amarilla* 'Mario is frequently interviewed by journalists from the tabloid press/US yellow press' is less usual although increasingly common in the media:

Basta saber que un hombre es buscado para que todos lo vean de manera distinta (CF, Mex., dialogue)	It's enough to know a man's being sought for everyone to look at him in a different way
El exministro de Hacienda es investigado por la Fiscalía (*La Razón*, Bol.)	The ex-minister of finance is investigated by the State Prosecutor
El parlamento gibraltareño tiene 17 miembros, de los que dos son puestos por el Gobierno inglés (*El País*, Sp. See note 3)	The Gibraltarian parliament has 17 members, two of which are appointed by the English [*sic*] Government

Most European informants found these sentences very formal and preferred a *se* construction or an active sentence, e.g. *basta saber que a un hombre se le busca . . ., la fiscalía investiga a . . ., . . . de los que el Gobierno inglés pone dos.*

(1) Unlike the passive with *ser*, *or* should not be used with passive *se*. *?*El puente se construyó por los romanos* is generally considered to be bad Spanish for *el puente fue construido por los romanos* 'the bridge was built by the Romans'. See 32.4.1, note 1 for more on this point.

(2) The difference between the passive with *ser*, *la ciudad fue destruida* 'the city was destroyed' (an event), and *la ciudad* ***estaba*** *destruida* 'the city was in a state of destruction' (result or outcome of an event) is discussed at 32.2.5.

(3) The example shows that the difference between 'British' and 'English' is not always respected outside the UK.

32.2.2 Constraints on the passive with *ser*

Students, particularly native speakers of English, should observe the following rules about the use of the Spanish passive with *ser*:

(**a**) **Important**: as mentioned earlier, the passive must not be used when the subject of the passive sentence would be an indirect object: '(s)he was sent a letter' is best translated *se le envió una carta* or *le enviaron una carta*. *(*Él*) *fue enviado una carta* or **ella fue enviada una carta* are not Spanish and

fue enviada una carta can only mean 'a letter was sent'. This is a common mistake among English-speaking beginners.

A possible literary translation of '(s)he was sent a letter' is ***le*** *fue enviada una carta.* This construction is rare in spontaneous speech and very unusual with other than third-person pronouns: *me fue enviada una carta*, *te fue enviada una carta*, etc., are not impossible but are uncommon.

(**b**) **Important**: the passive with *ser* should not be used with verbs like *pegar* 'to beat' which take the pronouns *le/les* as their third-person direct object even when this object is female: Section 15.6.4 includes a list of verbs similar to *pegar*. One can transform *su marido* ***la*** *adoraba* into *era adorada por su marido* 'she was adored by her husband', but *su marido* ***le*** *pegó/pegaba* 'her husband beat her' should not be transformed into **fue/era pegada por su marido*: *NGLE* 41.2e.

However, the verbs *pagar*, *preguntar* and *obedecer* always take *le/les* as a third-person object pronoun but can, exceptionally, be used with passive with *ser*:

Los ministros fueron preguntados . . . (*El País*, Sp.)	The minsters were asked . . .
. . . fue preguntado en relación con la falta de sanciones . . . (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	He was questioned about the lack of measures against . . .
Serás pagado por la Secretaría del Trabajo	You'll be paid by the Labour Ministry
Por la contundencia de su voz deduje que estaba acostumbrada a ser obedecida (AG, Sp., dialogue)	From her no-nonsense voice I inferred that she was used to being obeyed

Such sentences cannot include a direct object: one cannot say **fui preguntado una pregunta* for 'I was asked a question' (*se me hizo una pregunta/me hicieron una pregunta*) or **fui pagado el dinero* for 'I was paid the money' (*el dinero me fue pagado* (rare)*/se me pagó el dinero/me pagaron el dinero*).

(**c**) **Important**: in English a phrase consisting of a preposition + a noun or pronoun can make a passive sentence. This is absolutely impossible in Spanish. One can translate 'this bed has been slept **in**' only by *alguien ha dormido en esta cama* 'someone has slept in this bed', never by the incomprehensible ***esta cama ha sido dormido en.* Likewise 'she was talked about a lot' is *se hablaba mucho de ella* (impersonal *se* = 'people talked about her a lot'), never ***era hablada mucho de*, which is also unintelligible. Spanish sentences and clauses cannot end with prepositions.

(**d**) The passive with *ser* is not usual when the subject of *ser* 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 and in journalistic Latin-American Spanish; *dan en adopción a mascotas que eran vendidas por catálogo* (*El Comercio*, Pe.) 'pets sold by catalogue are given up for adoption' (. . .*se vendían por catálogo* would be more usual in Spain).

(**e**) The passive with *ser* is rarely used 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 (usually for calamities) – *momentos después era asesinado por un terrorista* 'seconds later he was murdered by a terrorist' (see 17.5.8 for discussion), and the historic present may denote a single past action, as in *el 22 de junio de 1941 la Unión Soviética es invadida por ejércitos alemanes* 'on 22 June 1941 the Soviet Union was (lit. 'is') invaded by German armies'.

(**f**) The passive with *ser* is not used in reciprocal constructions. One can say *se vieron el uno al otro* 'they saw one another', but never **fueron vistos el uno por el otro* *'they were seen by one another'.

(**g**) The Spanish passive with *ser* cannot be used in constructions that involve verbs of seeing, hearing, etc., followed by an infinitive: *vieron aterrizar el avión* 'they saw the plane land' can be made passive in English 'the plane was seen by them to land', but **el avión fue visto aterrizar* is not Spanish. A *se* construction must be used: *se vio cómo aterrizaba el avión* or *se vio aterrizar el avión. Vieron aterrizar el avión* is the most natural translation.

(**h**) Unattributed beliefs or opinions of the sort 'it is said that . . .', 'it is believed that', 'people thought that' are translated by a *se* construction: *se dice que*, *se cree que*, *se pensaba que*.

(**i**) The passive is not used with a number of verbs and for no obvious reason. This topic is discussed further in the Appendix to this chapter at 32.9.

32.2.3 Ways of avoiding the passive

English-speaking students constantly over-use the Spanish passive. It can be avoided in the following ways:

(**a**) **Make the sentence active** – the simplest solution, but tedious if overdone in written Spanish:

Los críticos lo/le alabaron (=*fue alabado por los críticos*)	He was praised by the critics
Suspendieron la sesión (= *la sesión fue suspendida*)	The session was suspended

(**b**) **Use passive *se*** (further discussed at 32.4).

The following typical piece of journalese *. . . su bufete privado es utilizado con frecuencia para asuntos propios del Gobierno* (*El País*, Sp.) 'his private office is often used for government business' could be neatly rephrased as *. . . su bufete privado **se** utiliza con frecuencia . . .*. But passive *se* should only be used if the agent of the action is not included in the sentence; in other words one should avoid constructions like * *. . . se utiliza por los secretarios . . .*. See 32.4.1 note 1 for details.

(c) Put the direct object before the verb. Since one function of the passive is to focus the object of a sentence – compare 'he preferred Jane' and '**Jane** was preferred by him' – the effect of an English passive can often be reproduced in Spanish by putting the direct object before the verb, e.g. *la sentencia la había dictado un juzgado de Madrid* 'the sentence had been delivered by a Madrid court'. A redundant object pronoun (in this case *la*) then usually becomes necessary: see 14.10.1 and 42.9.1, especially note 2, for details.

32.2.4 Passive meaning of the infinitive

In Spanish, the distinction between active and passive is often blurred in infinitive constructions as in *una botella sin abrir* 'an unopened bottle'. See 22.5.

32.2.5 Comparison between *ser convencido* and *estar convencido*

Important: the passive with *ser* denotes an action or an event while the participle with *estar* describes the result arising from an action or event. English rarely makes this distinction and English-speaking students may not grasp the difference between events and resulting states: 'it was (i.e. 'got') burnt in the fire yesterday' is an event, 'the toast was cold and black and it was

obviously burnt' describes a condition resulting from an event. Compare also *la puerta fue abierta* 'the door was open**ed**' (event) and *la puerta estaba abierta* 'the door was **open**' (resulting state).

The possibility of making this contrast is normally limited to verbs with a dynamic meaning, i.e. ones that describe events, not states. The participle of a non-dynamic verb (see Glossary) will probably denote only a state and therefore may only allow *estar*, cf. *estoy acatarrado* 'I've got a cold', *estás equivocado* 'you're mistaken', *está oxidado* 'it's rusty' (*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 23.2.1 for a list of these participles.

Examples of the contrast between passives with *ser* and *estar* (the latter is called the *pasiva resultativa* or *pasiva de resultado* in Spanish):

La ciudad fue destruida *(event)	The city was destroyed
La ciudad estaba destruida (state)	The city was in ruins
Fui detenido/Yo estaba detenido	I was arrested/I was under arrest
El manuscrito fue escrito en alemán (event)	The manuscript was written in German
El manuscrito estaba escrito en alemán (state)	The manuscript was in German
[El libro] estaba muy leído, subrayado en algunos pasajes, e incluso con notas al margen	[The book] had been read a lot, underlined in some places, and even had marginal notes
Los hechos históricos no están gobernados por leyes (OP, Mex.)	Historical facts are not governed by laws
En los días finales Berlín estuvo defendido por niños y ancianos (RM., Sp.)	During the final days Berlin was defended by children and old people

32.2.6 Alternatives to ser to express passive meaning

Several other verbs may be used instead of *ser* in the passive construction. They usually add nuances which can barely be translated into normal English:

(**a**) ***Quedar(se)***

Unlike English, Spanish often differentiates between states that are not necessarily the outcome of some process, and states that arise from some preceding process or activity. Consider the following sentences:

This is our new car. It's fantastic.
Este/Éste es nuestro coche nuevo. Es fantástico (not a 'result', so not *quedar*(*se*))
They're going to auction a painting by Velázquez. It's magnificent (not a result, so not *quedar*(*se*))
Van a subastar un cuadro de Velázquez. Es magnífico

We've washed the car and it looks/is fantastic
Hemos lavado el coche y ha quedado fantástico (as a result)
They've restored this painting by Velázquez. It looks magnificent
Han restaurado este cuadro de Velázquez. Ha quedado magnífico (as a result)

This use of *quedar*(*se*) to indicate the result of some process or activity is common in passive sentences:

Con este aguacero va a quedar hecho una sopa (ES, Mex., dialogue)	With this downpour you'll end up soaked to the skin (lit. 'turned into a soup')
Las casas (*se*) *quedaron desprovistas de luz*	The houses were left without light

Nos hemos quedado hechos un lío	We've got into a real mess
Queda dicho al principio de este párrafo que . . . (Academy, *Esbozo . . .*)	It was stated at the beginning of this paragraph that . . .

The use of *quedar*(*se*) with adjectives and participles is further discussed at 30.7.33.

(**b**) ***Resultar***

This verb is commonly used in Spanish to add a nuance that English tends to ignore. It roughly means 'to turn out to be', i.e. it suggests that the result is surprising or not predicted. Compare these sentences:

Las pelotas de golf son redondas (expected)	Golf balls are round
Me esperaba lo peor, pero la fiesta resultó ser un éxito (unexpected)	I was expecting the worst, but the party was/turned out to be a success

Resultar would sound strange in the first sentence but is normal in the second. *Resultar* is therefore much used to form passive sentences involving unforeseen outcomes. For more on *resultar* compared with *ser* see 14.6.3 and 31.3.7.

(**c**) ***Verse***

Verse is quite often used with a participle in formal styles, even with non-living subjects, and especially in the phrases *verse afectado* 'to be affected' and *verse obligado* 'to be obliged':

Mis ingresos eran reducidos, ya que se veían afectados por la piratería informática (letter, *El País*, Sp.)	My earnings were low because they were affected by software piracy
Se veía arrinconada en medio de una familia hostil (ES, Mex.)	She was trapped in the middle of an unfriendly family
Me veo obligado a denunciarte	I am obliged to report you

(**d**) ***Venir***

Use of *venir* also emphasizes that a condition has arisen from some previous event. It is confined to formal styles:

. . . 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 (Spanish phone book)	If omissions or error should appear in the directory, the Telephone Company will be obliged to correct them
Todas estas condiciones han complicado su estado de salud, que ya venía afectado desde su traslado (*Monumental*, Col.)	All these conditions have caused complications for the state of its [the lion's] health, which was already affected since its transfer [to the zoo]

32.2.7 Passive with *ser* or a *se* construction?

Learners often have to choose between the passive with *ser* and one of the *se* constructions described at 32.4–6, a choice that arises more often in speech since the passive with *ser* is generally more typical of written Spanish.

The passive with *ser* seems to be used in news reports or other impersonal styles more than the 'special' construction *se* + *a* + human direct object described at 32.5: *varias personas fueron*

rescatadas is probably more usual in newspapers than *se rescató a varias personas* 'several people were rescued'. It seems that this is due to the fact that the passive with *ser* tends to be less impersonal than passive *se*, i.e. it ascribes an action to some named or unnamed agent whereas constructions with *se* may suggest that anyone might do the same; in other words, the passive with *se* tends to be generalizing in meaning. Compare *las patatas se fríen en aceite de oliva* '(the) potatoes are fried in oil' (a typical action: the sentence could appear in a cookery book) and *las patas habían sido fritas en margarina* 'the potatoes had been fried in margarine (by someone or other)', which is not usual. Compare also *se aplaudió mucho a las niñas* 'the girls were applauded warmly' but *las niñas fueron asesinadas* 'the girls were murdered', a repugnant action that we want to ascribe to some specific though unnamed individual. *En Suecia se habla sueco* 'Swedish is spoken in Sweden' is normal since the identity of the speakers is too obvious to deserve mention; *el sueco es hablado en Suecia* sounds odd because it focuses on the action of speaking rather than on *what* is spoken and therefore suggests that one can do other things with Swedish as well as speak it.

The fact that, in the view of most grammarians, *por* should not be used with passive *se* may account for the frequent use in written language of the passive with *ser*: *varias investigaciones fueron realizadas por la policía* is the passive version of *la policía realizó varias investigaciones* 'the police carried out several investigations', not **?se realizaron varias investigaciones por la policía*, which is generally considered incorrect. See 32.4.1 note 1.

32.3 General remarks about passive and impersonal *se*

There are three types of passive and impersonal construction that use *se*:

(**a**) **The *pasiva refleja*** or 'passive *se*' (32.4). This is found only with transitive verbs in the third person, singular or plural: *se vendió la casa* 'the house was sold', *se debatieron varios problemas* 'several problems were discussed'.

(**b**) **The 'mixed' or 'special' construction** *se* + a transitive verb + *a* + direct object: see 32.5. The verb is always singular and third-person: *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*' (32.6). This is found with intransitive verbs, e.g. *se vive mejor aquí* 'one lives better here', and also with 'objectless' transitive verbs, as in *en este país se come mucho* 'people eat a lot in this country' (no mention of what they eat).

32.4 Passive *se* (*pasiva refleja*)

32.4.1 Basic rules

Passive *se/la pasiva refleja* can only be used with third-person transitive verbs, and usually only with non-living nouns and pronouns so as to avoid clashes of meaning with other uses of *se* (see 32.5 for discussion). It is normally equivalent in meaning to the passive with *ser*, but it is much more common in ordinary speech, more 'impersonal' than the passive with *ser* (32.2.7) and it should not be used when the agent of the action is mentioned: see note 1:

Los cangrejos se cuecen en vino blanco (recipe, Sp.)	The crabs are boiled in white wine
Se me contó un cuento chino	I was told a tall story (lit. 'Chinese story')
El vino se le sirvió en copas de cristal (MVM, Sp.)	The wine was served to him in crystal glasses

Nunca se oyeron y leyeron en el Perú tantas definiciones de la libertad de información (MVLl, Pe.)	Never were there heard and read in Peru so many definitions of freedom of information
Ayer hasta se veían los volcanes (ES, Mex., dialogue)	Yesterday you could even see the volcanoes
Se reparan relojes	Watches mended
Estos errores podrían deberse a . . .	These errors could be due to . . .
Se acababan de promulgar varias leyes	Several laws had just been published
Que se sepa	As far as is known
Eso no se hace	That sort of thing isn't done
Se dice que va a dimitir (see note 8)	They say/It's said that (s)he's going to resign

(1) Important: as was mentioned earlier, passive *se* should not be followed by *por* and the agent of the action: **la decisión se tomó por el presidente* is usually considered bad Spanish (outside legal language) for *la decisión fue tomada por el presidente* 'the decision was taken by the President'. However, it is seen and heard, e.g. ?*la decisión de irnos se tomó conjuntamente y por personas de la misma línea política* 'the decision to leave was taken jointly and by persons sharing the same political line', ?*el terrorismo no debe atacarse aisladamente por las naciones que lo padecen* (Felipe González in *El País*, Sp.) 'terrorism must not be combated individually by those nations that suffer from it'.

One hesitates to declare the construction to be always 'incorrect'. It was common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the *GDLE* notes contexts in which it is more acceptable than in others, although it says that the phenomenon is uncommon (*GDLE* 26.3.3). The *GDLE* 26.1.1.2, notes that **se pasaron los trabajos a ordenador por Sandra* 'the work was typed into the computer by Sandra' is ungrammatical. The *NGLE* 41.11h considers such a sentence to be 'very awkward' (*muy forzado*)

(2) Important: as far as form is concerned there is no difference between a third-person passive *se* construction and reflexive or reciprocal *se*. Common sense tells us that *los cangrejos se cuecen en vino blanco* does not mean 'the crabs cook themselves (or 'one another') in white wine'.

(3) Important: passive *se* must not be confused with intransitive *se*, described at 30.4.1. The *GDLE*, 26.2.1.1, gives two examples in which context alone differentiates the meaning of *se*: *en verano los bosques se queman fácilmente* 'in summer the forests burn easily' (intransitive) and *se quemaron los bosques para acabar con la plaga* 'the forests were burnt to get rid of the infestation' (passive *se*). The latter implies an intentional action.

(4) For a comparison of passive *se* construction with the passive with *ser* – *el problema se solucionó/ el problema fue solucionado* 'the problem was solved' – see 32.2.7.

(5) *Vendieron los libros* 'they sold the books' can be transformed into the sentence *se vendieron* 'they were sold' or *fueron vendidos*, but not (at least in Spain nor, generally, in careful language) into *se los vendió.* See 32.4.2 and 32.5.2 for discussion.

(6) Passive *se* may be used to form a passive imperative useful for impersonal footnotes and written instructions: *no se crea que* 'let it not be believed that . . .'/'do not think that . . .', *téngase presente que* 'let it be borne in mind that . . .'/'bear in mind that . . .', *véanse las páginas 10 y 11* 'see pages 10 and 11'. See 21.8.

(7) French passive *se*, as in *cela ne se dit pas* (= *eso no se dice* 'that isn't said'/'one doesn't say that') is more restricted in use and tends to be reserved for timeless statements.

(8) The old-fashioned form *dícese que* 'it is said that' is no doubt the origin of a colloquial form, very widespread in Latin America in various guises, e.g. *isque*, *dizque*. It is often sarcastic: *a los*

seis años de andar dizque (Sp. *según dicen*) *gobernando se puso enfermo* (AM, Mex.) 'after six years of so-called "governing" he fell ill', *Berenice, la dizque estrella del espectáculo* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'Berenice, the so-called star of the show'.

32.4.2 Agreement of the verb with passive *se*

In theory, any verb used with *se* must agree with the logical subject. This applies to all constructions involving reflexive, reciprocal and passive *se*. Compare *los niños se está**n** lavando* (reflexive) 'the children are washing' or '. . . are washing one another' and *las tuercas se quita**n** con llave, no con martillo* (passive *se*) 'bolts are removed with a spanner/US wrench, not with a hammer'. Further examples of the agreement of the verb with passive *se*:

*Se mezcla**n** en la batidora los tomates sin pepitas y sin piel*	The tomatoes, without skin and pips, are mixed in the liquidizer
*Se env**iaron** los hombres y las armas necesarios para concluirla* (i.e. *la lucha*: FC, Cu.)	The men and weapons necessary to finish it [the fight] were sent
*Son maravillas que se ve**n** una sola vez en la vida* (ES, Mex., dialogue)	They're marvels that are only seen once in a lifetime

In constructions involving passive *se*, the rules of agreement are always respected when a plural noun comes before the verb: *los libros se vendía**n** a diez dólares* 'the books were being sold for ten dollars', never **los libros se vendía a diez dólares.*

However, when the verb comes before a plural noun, familiar and popular language sometimes breaks the rules of agreement: ?*se compra objetos usados* 'used articles bought' for *se compran objetos usados*. This phenomenon raises problems for an impartial grammarian, since many speakers consider ?*se compra objetos* . . . to be incorrect and others, including a few grammarians, accept it on the grounds that this is really an impersonal *se* construction. Plural agreement seems overwhelmingly to be the norm on both continents (see DeMello 1995, 1, for a survey) and foreigners should observe it.

The *NGLE* 41.12d notes that whereas a singular verb in such cases is generally avoided in Spain, it is accepted in the Andes, Chile and the River Plate region, and it is not uncommon elsewhere in Latin America outside Mexico. Furthermore, the *NGLE* 41.12l concedes that if the implied subject of a sentence is human and the object non-living, both constructions can be possible. It quotes *se firmó/se firmaron los acuerdos* 'the agreements were signed'. However, 'in cases of doubt', the Academy recommends the plural form (*NGLE* 41.12o), as we do.

Rather arbitrarily, singular agreement is common and allowed in classified advertisements of the sort *se busca dependientes* 'shop-assistants'/US 'sales clerks' sought', *se necesita camareros* 'waiters required'.

The following forms may be unacceptable to many speakers:

?*Y nunca más se **ha** tenido noticias de su paradero* (*Abc*, Sp., for *se han tenido . . .*)	And no more news has been received of his whereabouts
?*Se necesit**a** agallas para hacer eso* (Spanish informant overheard: *se necesita**n** agallas*)	You need guts to do that
?*Se les d**io** varios premios* (for *se les dieron . . .*)	Several prizes were given to them
?*Se vend**e** máquinas de coser usadas* (notice in Mexico City)	Used sewing machines for sale

(1) The last example must be exceptional in view of the claim of J.M. Lope Blanch (1991, 12), that Mexican Spanish preserves, 'casi con exclusividad, la construcción pasiva refleja del tipo "se rentan departamentos" (Sp. *se alquilan pisos*) sin dar entrada a la construcción activa impersonal del tipo "se vende botellas", relativamente frecuente en el habla española'.

(2) When passive *se* is followed by the interrogative words *cuánto*, *qué*, *cuál* or *quién* 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 on what stocks remained', *no se sabe quiénes son* 'it is not known who they are'.

(3) With verbs of perception followed by an infinitive, both singular and plural agreement seem equally acceptable: *se veía*(*n*) *caer gotas de agua* 'drops of water could be seen falling'.

(4) The verb *tardar* is a special case. It is always singular in this construction: *se tardó varias horas en llegar a un acuerdo* 'it took several hours to reach an agreement' (lit. 'several hours were taken to reach . . .'). This must not be confused with the Latin-American verb *tardarse* (*tardar* in Spain), mentioned at 30.8.

32.4.3 Agreement of passive *se* with auxiliary verbs

Agreement with plural nouns is required with auxiliary verbs (*poder*, *saber*, *tener que*, *haber de*, *querer*, *soler*) when they precede the infinitive of a transitive verb. In this case *se* can be suffixed to the infinitive or it can precede the modal verb:

*Se tiene**n** que resolver varios problemas/ Tiene**n** que resolverse varios problemas*	Several problems must be solved
Se deben limpiar bien antes de cocerlas (or *deben limpiarse*)	They should be washed well before cooking
. . . cosas que no se quieren hacer/cosas que no quieren hacerse	. . . things one doesn't want to do
¿Se pueden prevenir las várices? (*El Comercio*, Pe., Sp. usually *las varices*)	Can varicose veins be prevented?
En Londres por la calle se pueden observar los tipos de personas más extrañas (*Cosmopolitan*, Sp.)	In London the oddest types of people can be seen in the streets

See 14.3.3–7 for further discussion of the position of pronouns with the infinitive.

(1) Singular agreement with auxiliary verbs followed by an infinitive and a plural object is generally considered to be incorrect, but it is commonly seen and heard, cf. ?*se puede imprimir textos con más rapidez con un procesador de textos* (*Ordenador Personal*, Sp., for *se pueden*) 'texts can be printed more rapidly with a word processor', ?*la Ley prohíbe que se pueda transferir fondos de un programa a otro* (*La Prensa*, Pan.) 'the Law prohibits the transfer of funds from one programme to another' (for *se puedan transferir*).

(2) There is, however, an increasing contrary tendency, criticized by the *NGLE* 41.11n and other grammars, to pluralize non-modal verbs (e.g. *desear*, *intentar*, *esperar*, *tratar de*, etc.) before an infinitive whose object is plural, cf. ?*se necesita**n** resolver muchos problemas* 'many problems have to be resolved', ?*cuando se trata**n** de estudiar los hallazgos de tiempos pasados* (*Abc*, Sp.) 'when an attempt is made to study the discoveries of the past', ?*y en el Ministerio de Obras Públicas* (*MOP*) *también se espera**n** firmar otros contratos* (*El Comercio*, Ec.) 'and in the Ministry of Public Works it is also hoped that other contracts will be signed'. These verbs should be singular and foreigners should observe this rule, but use of the plural in this construction is spreading.

32.5 *Se* + transitive verb (the 'special' construction)

32.5.1 General

Passive *se* as described at 32.4 is usually perfectly clear in meaning if there is no noun in the sentence that could be understood to be the subject, as is usually the case when talking about non-living things: *los platos se lavan* 'the plates are washed' is unlikely to mean ?'the plates wash themselves' or 'one another'. However, a problem arises with nouns that refer to creatures – especially people – that can do things to themselves: *se consideraban muy inteligentes* could easily mean 'they considered themselves very intelligent' or '. . . considered one another very intelligent' as well as 'they were considered very intelligent'.

Spanish has developed a way round this problem by inserting an object pronoun: *se* ***les /los/las*** *consideraba muy inteligentes* 'they were considered to be very intelligent', *se nos criticó* 'we were criticized', etc. If a noun is included in the sentence, the preposition *a* is placed in front of it: *se consideraba muy inteligentes* ***a*** *los alumnos* 'the students were considered to be very intelligent'.

We call this *se* construction the 'special' construction, and three points must be remembered about it:

(**a**) In the 'special' construction the verb is always singular: **se les consideraban muy inteligentes* for *se les consideraba . . .* is a bad mistake.

(**b**) In the 'special' construction the word *se* implies an unidentified and usually human agent, in which respect it resembles English 'one', French *on*, German *man*. In other words, one could not say *se mató a dos turistas* for 'two tourists were killed' if they were killed by a falling tree or a bolt of lightning, in which case one would say *murieron dos turistas* or *dos turistas resultaron muertos.*

(**c**) As stated earlier, the noun can be replaced by an object pronoun: *se* ***me*** *había reconocido* 'I had been recognized', *se* ***les/los/las*** *reconoció* 'they were recognized'.

Examples of the 'special' construction:

Se persiguió y encarceló a millares de creyentes (*El País*, Sp.)	Thousands of believers were persecuted and jailed
Se incitaba a las muchachas a trabajar más que los muchachos	The girls were encouraged to work harder than the boys
¿Se puede destrozar a una persona de esa manera porque se la ama de esa manera . . .? (ABE, Pe.)	Can one destroy a person that way because one loves them that way?
No se te paga tan mal, entonces, si puedes comprarte tus revistas (SV, Ch., dialogue)	You're not that badly paid if you can afford to buy your magazines
A pesar de su pobre estado físico, se le convocó al servicio activo (JV, Mex.)	Despite his poor physical condition, he was drafted for active military service

(1) Important: when a third-person pronoun replaces the noun in this type of sentence, many speakers, including Latin Americans, prefer *le/les* to *lo/la/los/las* despite the fact that the pronouns are the direct object of the verb and may also be feminine: *se* ***le*** *veía nerviosa* 'one could see she was nervous' instead of *se* ***la*** *veía*; but the latter is not incorrect. This is discussed in more detail at 15.6.3.

(2) As was mentioned, the verb must be singular in this construction. **Se les notaban cansados* is incorrect for *se les notaba cansados* 'one could see they were tired'. See 32.4.3 for sentences like *se pueden ver los árboles desde aquí* 'the trees are visible from here' which is passive *se* and not the 'special' construction.

(3) Before the eighteenth century, *Juan y Antonio se vieron* could also mean 'Juan and Antonio were seen'. Nowadays it is taken to mean 'saw one another' or 'saw themselves', and *se vio a Antonio y a* Juan, or, in written styles, *Antonio y Juan fueron vistos*, would be used for the passive. In modern journalism, passive with *ser* is in fact increasingly preferred to the 'special' construction. See 32.2.7.

32.5.2 Difference between the 'special' construction and passive *se*

Foreign students, and, it must be admitted, quite a few native speakers, have difficulty distinguishing between the 'special' construction just described and passive *se*, especially when pronouns replace nouns, as in *se le/la nota feliz* 'one can see she's happy'.

In theory, and also in practice as far as most careful speakers and writers are concerned, passive *se* is used only when the direct object of the equivalent active sentence refers to something non-living, and the 'special' construction is reserved for cases in which passive *se* might be ambiguous because the direct object is an identified human being or an animal. This should be clear from the difference between the following sentences:

***A** Eugenio d'Ors se **lo/le** lee poco* ('special' construction)	Eugenio d'Ors isn't read much
*Los libros de Eugenio d'Ors se lee**n** poco* (*se pasivo*)	Eugenio d'Ors's books aren't read much
*Se **lo/le** lee poco* (refers to a male author: 'special' construction)	**He** isn't read much/people don't read him much
Se lee poco (refers to a book: passive *se*)	**It** isn't read much
*Se **le/la** admira mucho* (i.e. a woman: 'special' construction)	**She**'s admired a lot
Se admira mucho (e.g. some non-living thing: passive *se*)	**It**'s admired a lot
*Se **las/les** criticó duramente* (i.e. some women: 'special' construction)	They were strongly criticized
Se criticaron duramente (i.e. some non-living things: passive *se*)	They were strongly criticized

These examples show that passive *se* constructions cannot contain a direct object pronoun (apart from *se*, which is not always a direct object pronoun). In *se los envió*, *se* cannot be the direct object, which is *los*, so it cannot be passive *se*. So, the sentence must mean one of two things:

(**a**) '(S)he sent them to her/him/you (*usted/ustedes*)/them', active sentence in which *se* stands for *le* or *les* by the 'rule of two l's' discussed at 14.9. This is the likely reading.

(**b**) or it is an example of the 'special' construction, so it means 'they (human beings) were sent': *se los/les envió*.

But it cannot usually mean 'they were sent' (passive meaning) if 'they' refers to something non-living like 'books': the latter can only be *se enviaron* (or *fueron enviados*). See 32.8 for exceptions.

(1) Important: the passive *se* construction is, however, allowed with human beings when the latter are unidentified, as in *se necesitan secretarias* 'secretaries needed', *se ven muchos turistas en la playa* 'a lot of tourists are seen on the beach'. Compare *se ve a los dos alemanes tumbados en la playa* 'you can see the two Germans lying on the beach' (identified or specified persons).

32.6 Impersonal *se*

32.6.1 General

Spanish also uses *se* with third-person verbs as an equivalent of the English 'one'/'people', French *on*, German *man*. Impersonal *se*, like English 'one' and French *on*, refers to an unidentified *human* agent. This is demonstrated by the absurdity of **es difícil dormir por las noches porque se ladra mucho*? 'it's difficult to sleep at night because one barks a lot' which in both languages could only refer to people, not to dogs.

Impersonal *se* most commonly occurs with intransitive verbs: *se está mejor aquí* 'one's better off here' (French *on est mieux ici*), *se entra por aquí* (French *on entre par ici*) 'one goes in this way', etc. But impersonal *se* can also be used with transitive verbs, as in *en este país se lee poco* 'in this country people don't read much' – a construction easily confused with passive *se*. See 32.6.3 for more on this point.

32.6.2 Impersonal *se* with intransitive verbs

The following examples show impersonal *se* used with intransitive verbs. The verb is always singular. In some cases, explained in note 3, *uno* could be used instead of *se*:

No se puede entrar	It is impossible to enter/No entry
Siempre se vuelve a los sitios a los que se pertenece (AG, Sp., dialogue; or *uno vuelve . . . uno pertenece*)	One always returns to the places one belongs to
O se va a referéndum, o habrá guerra civil	Either a referendum is held, or there will be a civil war
¿Quién puede pensar en nada cuando se está rodeado de idiotas? (CS, Mex., dialogue)	Who can think of anything when one's surrounded by idiots?
. . . que en vez de ser pobre, se es rico; que en vez de ser nadie, se es alguien . . . (SV, Ch., dialogue; or *uno es rico, . . . uno es alguien*)	. . . that instead of being poor, one's rich, that instead of being nobody, one's somebody
Pareció llegarse a un acuerdo tácito para descansar (JC, Arg.)	It appeared that a tacit agreement was reached to get some rest
Se cruza si el semáforo está en verde y se espera si está en rojo (*El País*, Sp.)	One crosses if the lights are green and one waits if they are red

(1) Important: impersonal *se* cannot be used with a verb that already has *se* attached to it. One cannot say ***se se esfuerza mucho* for 'people make a great effort': *la gente se esfuerza mucho* or *uno/una se esfuerza mucho*. See 30.11.

(2) As with most sentences involving *se*, common sense and context usually clarify the meaning. Thus *se iba al teatro* may mean '(s)he was going to the theatre' (*irse* is also a pronominal verb meaning 'to go away') or 'people used to go to the theatre' (impersonal *se*).

(3) As was mentioned, in some cases *uno* can be used instead of impersonal *se*. This is possible when *se* includes the speaker, as in *nunca escuchaba cuando se le hablaba/cuando **uno** le hablaba* '(s)he never listened when one spoke to him/her/when (s)he was spoken to'. But when the speaker excludes him/herself, *uno* is not possible, as in *este/éste es un país donde se fuma y se bebe* (or *donde fuman y beben*) *mucho* 'this is a country where people smoke and drink a lot'.

(4) Impersonal *se* may even appear in combination with the passive with *ser*, although this is rare: *no se debe hablar más que con personas a las que* ***se ha sido ya presentado*** 'one should only talk to people one has been introduced to' (CRG, Sp., dialogue).

(5) The *se* in this construction can refer to males or females: *si se está embarazad**a** hay que dejar de fumar* 'if one is pregnant one must stop smoking'. This gender agreement with *se* suggests that the latter in such sentences in fact functions as a subject pronoun and not as a direct or indirect object.

(6) The use of *se* with intransitive verbs has no counterpart in French, which uses *on.*

32.6.3 Impersonal *se* with transitive verbs

Impersonal *se* can also be used with transitive verbs, in which case the verb is always singular and no direct object appears:

En España se come mucho	People eat a lot in Spain (in general; does not refer to any specific food)
Sí, se habla, se habla . . .	Yes, people talk and talk . . .
Es difícil vender periódicos en un país donde se lee poco (cf. *se lee**n** poco*, passive *se*: 'they aren't read much')	It's difficult to sell newspapers in a country where people don't read much
Se hablaba de todo menos de asuntos laborales (ES, Mex.)	Everything was talked about except work matters
Se critica mucho pero se alaba poco	People criticize a lot but don't praise much

(1) Important: students – and quite a few native speakers – find it difficult to distinguish between this construction and passive *se*. The difference depends on whether a noun underlies the sentence. If it does, then the construction is passive *se*; if not, it is impersonal *se.* Thus, if we are talking about garlic, the sentence *en España se come mucho* is taken to mean 'a lot **of it** is eaten in Spain' (passive *se*, French *on **en** mange beaucoup*). If the conversation is simply about quantities eaten in general, the same sentence means 'people eat a lot in Spain' (no underlying noun, French *on mange beaucoup*) and the *se* is impersonal *se*.

(2) If a direct object pronoun appears in an impersonal *se* construction, it can usually refer only to a human being: *se le considera útil* '(s)he is considered useful/you're considered useful', but not '**it** is considered useful', which is *se considera útil* (passive *se*): see 32.5.2 for more on this controversial point.

32.7 Other impersonal constructions

32.7.1 *Uno/una* as a pronoun

This is similar to the English 'one' and it can be a modest way of saying 'I' or 'we'. A woman referring to herself and/or other females uses *una*, but *uno* if humankind in general is intended. Its object forms are *lo/la/le.* For many Latin Americans *uno* is the only form used, even by women, but the following examples show that this is not universal. *Uno/una* is often interchangeable with impersonal *se*:

Bueno, si no le dicen a una cómo hay que hacerlo . . . (woman speaking)	Well, if they don't tell one how to do it
¿Era eso el socialismo, hacer por obligación moral todo lo que uno no quiere hacer? (EP, Mex.)	Was that socialism – doing out of moral obligation everything one doesn't want to do?

En ese tiempo una no hablaba de eso con las amigas (MVLl, Pe., dialogue, woman speaking; or *no se hablaba de eso*)
In those days one didn't talk about those things with one's female friends

Con tal de salirse con la suya, la llevan a una a la tumba (AA, Cu., dialogue; mother complaining about her children)
As long as they get their own way, they'll put one in one's grave

(1) Colloquially *uno/una* may also mean 'someone'. See 10.3 note 4.

32.7.2 Impersonal *tú*

The second-person singular is often used impersonally, much the same as English 'you'. *Uno* or *se* may be preferred when one is on formal terms with the hearer:

*Yo nunca voy allí porque **te** cobran más que en otra parte* (*le cobran a uno más*)
I never go there because they charge you more than elsewhere

Es increíble, si lo piensas (*si uno lo piensa*)
It's incredible if you think of it

Si eres niño no tienes derecho a que te gusten las mujeres (JP, Mex., dialogue)
If you're (i.e. 'one is') a child you've got no right to like women

Es que no se tiene conciencia de que pasa el tiempo cuando eres joven (Queen Sofía in *El País*, Sp. Mixed pronouns, common in informal styles)
It's that one isn't conscious of time passing when you're young

32.7.3 Impersonal third-person plural

As in English, the third-person plural is constantly used impersonally when the speaker does not include him/herself or the hearer in the reference:

Dicen que las zanahorias son buenas para los ojos (= *se dice que . . .*)
They say carrots are good for the eyes

Parece que hablan más despacio en Estados Unidos que en Inglaterra (= *que se habla*)
It seems that they speak more slowly in the United States than in England

¿Le parece normal que hablen de usted así . . .? (AC, Mex., dialogue)
Do you think it's normal for people to talk about you like that?

Appendix to Chapter 32

32.8 The 'special' construction with non-living direct objects: further remarks

It was stated at 32.5.2 that the 'special' construction *se* + transitive verb – *se admiraba al autor/se le admiraba* 'the author was admired/he was admired' – is generally reserved for cases in which the direct object refers to an identified human being or, less commonly, to an animal: normally *se admiraba* can refer only to lifeless things *'it* was admired' – unless we read it as a reflexive: '(s)he admired himself/herself'.

But the 'special construction' may appear with a non-living direct object to remove any possibility of understanding a pronominal verb form as a passive *se* or some other type of *se* construction. Thus *los metales blandos se derriten con facilidad* means 'soft metals melt easily', but *se derrite los*

metales blandos con facilidad means 'soft metals are easily melted' – impersonal *se* ('special' construction), because *se derriten* is ambiguous. Likewise one might say *se quemó los libros* 'the books were burnt' (intentional) to avoid the ambiguity of *se quemaron los libros* 'the books burnt'. The example with *derretirse*, but not the explanation, is inspired by *GDLE* 23.3.2.3.

Further examples: *hay que cruzar el río Tajo, y* ***se le cruza*** *por el puente llamado del Cardenal* (Miguel de Unamuno, Sp.) 'one has to cross the river Tagus, and one crosses it over the bridge called the Cardinal's Bridge'; *en la obra de la santa de Ávila* ***se ve*** *esas dulces huertas interiores de esta tierra* (ibid.) 'in the work of the saint of Avila [Teresa] one can see those gentle interior gardens typical of this land'; s*u extensión* [i.e. *de esta pauta*] *es muy reducida, pues* ***se la ha señalado*** *para el oeste de Panamá* (*GDLE*, p. 1411) 'its scope [i.e. of this grammatical tendency] is very limited, since it has been noted in the west of Panama', *el ascensor subía por dentro de las barandillas y* ***se le oía*** *chirriar desde todas las habitaciones de la casa* (CMG, Sp.) 'the lift went up on the inside of the banisters, and one could hear it squeaking from every room in the house'. Presumably the nature of the verbs in the preceding paragraph persuaded the writers against *se cruza*, which could mean 'crosses over itself', *se ven*, which in a writer like Unamuno addicted to personification could mean 'see themselves', *se ha señalado* which can mean 'has stood out'; and *se oía chirriar* might be read as 'one could hear squeaking' rather than 'one could hear it squeak'. However, when there is no possibility of ambiguity, the 'special' construction with lifeless direct objects may sound incorrect: ?*se publicó tres novelas suyas en 2016* for *se publicaron tres novelas suyas en 2016* 'three of his/her novels were published in 2016' and ?*se las publicó en* 2016 for *se publicaron en 2016* 'they were published in 2016' are unacceptable for many Spanish-speakers.

32.9 Verbs that do not allow the passive with *ser*

These are more numerous than in English, which also has constraints on the use of the passive with 'to be', e.g. 'the window was broken by Jill' but not *'the stairs were descended by Jill' and not *'his watch was lost by Tom' as the passive of 'Tom lost his [own] watch'. Only familiarity with the language will eliminate such malformations as **fueron esperados por sus padres* 'they were expected by their parents', **fue permitido hacerlo* 'he was allowed to do it', both of them sentences which should be expressed in the active form or, in the second example, by impersonal *se*: *se le permitió hacerlo* (but ***le*** *fue permitido hacerlo* 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*. Similarly one does not normally say ?**el cable fue cortado por un cuchillo* 'the cable was cut by a knife' for . . . *fue cortado* ***con*** *un cuchillo*.

The *GDLE*'s explanation, 26.3.12, is that bombing is 'intentional' and a stone has no 'intention'. But where is the 'intention' in *el cráter fue producido por un meteoro* 'the crater was produced by a meteor'? The correct explanation seems to be that when the noun clearly refers to the instrument with which some person performed an action (in these cases 'stone', 'knife') the passive construction is avoided.

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*).

It would be beyond the scope of this grammar to establish a comprehensive list of verbs which do not allow the passive 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 or written language.

33 *Ser* and *estar*

The main topics discussed here are:

- The uses of *ser* (Section 33.2)
- The uses of *estar* (Section 33.3)
- When *ser* and *estar* are more or less interchangeable (Section 33.4)
- *Estar* used to mean 'seem', 'taste', etc. (Section 33.4.3)
- *Ser* or *estar* used to change the meaning of adjectives (Section 33.4.4)

For the conjugation of *ser* see 16.11.45 and of *estar* see 16.11.21.

33.1 General

Ser and *estar* both translate the English 'to be', but the difference between the two Spanish verbs is fundamental and sometimes subtle.

Basically *ser* is used to answer questions about *who* or *what* something or someone is, whereas *estar* answers questions about *where*, *how* or in *what condition* someone or something is: *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 keeping silent (at the moment)'; *el hierro es un elemento* 'iron is an element', *el hierro está oxidado* 'the iron is rusty'.

It is misleading to say that *ser* indicates permanent features and *estar* temporary conditions: thus *está muerto* 'he/it is dead' is a condition or state, however permanent. A woman can change her hair colour and still say *antes* ***era*** *morena pero ahora* ***soy*** *rubia* 'I was a brunette before, but now I'm a blonde' because each colour is considered to be a typical feature, not a 'state' that she is in.

Ser is also sometimes used with a few adjectives that indicate what can be thought of as states or conditions: see 33.2.3.

Some adjectives may be used with either *ser* or *estar* with hardly any significant change of meaning. See 33.4.1.

Estar before a noun phrase can normally only denote location: compare *¿es el jefe?* 'is (s)he/are you 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 sacacorchos?* 'where's the corkscrew?'. See 33.2.5.

Ser is used to form the 'dynamic' passive *la puerta fue abierta* 'the door was open**ed**' (an action). *Estar* can form what the grammarians call the *pasiva resultativa* or *pasiva de resultado*: *la puerta estaba abierta* 'the door was open' (a state or result, not an action); see 32.2.5.

Estar is used for the continuous aspect of verbs: *está hablando* 'he's talking'; see Chapter 19.

Both *ser* and *estar* are often echoed or 'resumed' by *lo*, as in —*Ana parece sueca*—. *Lo es* '"Ana looks Swedish." "She is"'. See 8.4.2.

The relationship between *ser* and *estar* has evolved over the centuries, so readers may find exceptions to the following rules in pre-eighteenth-century texts.

33.2 Uses of *ser*

33.2.1 In sentences of the type A = B

The most common use of *ser* is to link elements in statements of the type 'A = B', where A and B are nouns or pronouns:

París es la capital de Francia	Paris is the capital of France
Era médico/abogado/bibliotecario	He was a doctor/lawyer/librarian
Es la una/Son las doce	It's one o'clock/twelve o'clock
Ha sido un año/verano frío	It's been a cold year/summer
Otro gran problema fue la cuestión de los braceros (JA, Mex.).	Another major problem was the issue of the seasonal farm labourers
Una conexión de banda ancha es la solución	A broadband connection is the solution
Son ellos/ellas	It's them

(1) Important: *estar* cannot appear before nouns or pronouns unless the latter are its subject: **yo estoy maestro* is emphatically not Spanish for 'I'm a schoolteacher': *soy maestro*. *Está Miguel* means 'Miguel is in/at home/there' (location); it *never* means 'he is Miguel': *es Miguel*.

Exceptions to this rule are rare and include *estar pez*, e.g. *estoy pez en historia* 'I'm a complete dunce in history' and *estar mosca* 'to be needled/irritated' (both perhaps used colloquially in Spain only?), *está un día que da gusto salir a la calle* 'it's one of those days when you like going out into the streets'.

The *NGLE* 37.9a notes that in Mexico one hears sentences like *estaba jefe* '(s)he was temporarily acting as boss', but this seems to be unknown or rare elsewhere and it is not heard in Spain.

(2) Important: English changes verb forms between sentences like 'you **are** the only person I love' and 'the only person I love **is** you'. Spanish does not: *tú **eres** la única persona a la que quiero* > *la única persona a la que quiero **eres** tú*. Similarly one says *el jefe **soy** yo* 'I'm the boss'; also ***soy** yo* 'it's me', *eres tú* 'it's you', never **es yo*, **es tú*.

33.2.2 *Ser* with adjectives

Ser is used with adjectives or adjectival phrases which indicate identity or nature, i.e. physical, moral and mental characteristics, as opposed to conditions or states:

—¿Cómo eres? —Soy alto, moreno y delgado	'What are you like?' 'I'm tall, dark and slim'
Esa chaqueta es bien bonita	That jacket is very nice
Así soy de testarudo (GCI, Cu., dialogue)	That's how stubborn I am
Uno de ellos será bueno y el otro malvado (JV, Mex., dialogue)	One of them will be nice and the other one nasty

(1) *Hacer* is used in statements about the weather that involve certain nouns. One uses *tener frío/calor* for sensations: compare *tiene frío* '(s)he feels cold' and *es muy frío* 'he is very cold' (i.e. emotionless).

33.2.3 *Ser* with certain adjectives apparently denoting states

Ser is normally used with *pobre* 'poor', *feliz* 'happy', *desgraciado* 'unhappy', *inocente* 'innocent', *culpable* 'guilty', *consciente* 'aware', despite the fact that they may be thought of as conditions or states, and sometimes temporary ones as well:

Ahora que el precio del petróleo ha bajado, este país es pobre	Now that the price of (crude) oil has dropped, this country is poor
El acusado dijo que era inocente/culpable	The accused said he was innocent/guilty
Soy consciente de mis limitaciones	I'm conscious/aware of my limitations
Pocas veces fue tan feliz como en las horas que precedieron a la entrevista (ES, Arg.)	He was seldom so happy as during the hours before the interview
Ella decía ser más o menos feliz (JV, Mex., dialogue)	She said she was more or less happy
—*Soy tan desgraciada— me dijo* (GCI, Cu., dialogue)	'I'm so unhappy,' she told me

(1) *Ser feliz/infeliz* 'to be happy/unhappy' is the traditional form except in the phrase *estoy feliz y contento* 'I'm happy and satisfied'. However, Latin Americans frequently use *estar* with *feliz*: *estaban tan felices que me dieron envidia* (AM, Mex., dialogue) 'they were so happy that they filled me with envy', *acaban de ganar las elecciones y están felices* (ABE, Pe., dialogue) 'they've just won the elections and they're happy'. This use of *estar* with *feliz* is spreading in Spain, cf. *en la academia militar este niño de mamá no estaba muy feliz* (RM, Sp.) 'in the Military Academy this mother's boy was not very happy'. *Contento* always takes *estar*.

(2) *Estar rico* generally means 'to be tasty'/'to taste nice' in Spain (see 33.4.4), 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* (AM, Mex.) 'Andrés accompanied Father José, who was extremely rich, and he heard him swear by the Virgin of Covadonga that he didn't have a centavo'.

(3) European Spanish differentiates *ser consciente* (*de*) 'to be aware/conscious of' and *estar consciente* 'to be conscious' (i.e. awake). In Latin America, the distinction is not always made: *quienes no están conscientes de su libertad no son libres* 'those who are not aware of their freedom are not free' (EP, Mex., dialogue; but in the same novel *tú eres muy consciente . . .* 'you're clearly aware . . .').

(4) *Está claro* 'it's clear/obvious' is usual in Spain, but *es claro* is common in Latin America: *es claro que, cuando eso acaba, debe quedarle a uno un sentimiento de dignidad* (MB, Ur., dialogue) 'it's obvious that when that ends one must be left with a feeling of dignity'.

33.2.4 *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: *soy de La Paz* 'I come from La Paz', *es de mármol* 'it's made of marble'. See 38.8.3–4.

(1) *Estar de . . .* has other uses: see 33.3.3.

33.2.5 *Ser* of events

If 'to be' means 'to take place' or 'to happen' it must be translated by *ser*:

La fiesta es/se celebra en su casa	The party is at his/her 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 encuentro fue en el Hotel Washington (MSQ, Arg.)	The meeting was in the Washington Hotel
El entierro sería a las cinco (GGM, Col.)	The funeral was to be at five o'clock
—¿Dónde fue? —En su casa. (GZ, Mex., dialogue)	'Where did it happen? 'In his house'

(1) Use of *estar* would imply an object or person. Compare *¿dónde **es** la conferencia?* 'where's the lecture (being held)?' and *¿dónde **está** la conferencia?* 'where's the lecture?' (i.e. the lecture notes or typescript). Note also *el reloj es/va encima del aparador* 'the clock belongs on top of the sideboard', as opposed to . . . *está* . . . 'is on . . .'.

33.3 Uses of *estar*

33.3.1 *Estar* used to describe states as opposed to identity or nature

Estar is used with adjectives and adjectival phrases that indicate mood, physical condition, temporary physical appearance or other non-characteristic features. Note the difference between *es guapa* 'she's good-looking' and *está guapa* 'she's looking good/attractive', *eres moreno* 'you have dark skin' and *estás moreno* 'you're sun-tanned/you've got brown'. *Estar* is much used to indicate a change of state, e.g. when someone's appearance or condition has changed since last meeting them:

Está más bien triste/contenta	(S)he's rather sad/pleased
Hoy no estoy muy católico	I don't feel too great today (lit. 'I'm not feeling too Catholic')
El destino no está predeterminado por nada (CSG, Mex., dialogue)	Fate isn't predetermined by anything
El agua que se añada tiene que estar caliente	The water to be added has to be hot
Está parado desde febrero	He's been out of work since February
Estuvo callado todo el tiempo	He was silent all the time
Pero ¡qué alto estás!	Wow, you've grown tall!
—Estás muy española hoy—. Claro, es que soy española	'You're looking very Spanish today'. 'Obviously. I *am* Spanish'.

(1) *Ser hecho de* for *estar hecho de* sounds poetic or archaic: *¡y cuán frágil el barro de que somos hechos!* (R. del Valle-Inclán, Sp., 1890s) 'and how frail the clay of which we are made!'

(2) *Estar caliente* means 'to be hot' when applied to lifeless things like coffee, metals, but 'to be sexually excited' when applied to humans. 'I feel hot/cold' is *tengo calor/frío.*

33.3.2 *Estar* to indicate location

Estar is used to say *where* something is, but *ser* must be used for the location of events, as explained at 33.2.5.

Sitges está en Cataluña	Sitges is in Catalonia
Si buscan a mi hijo no está (EM, Mex. dialogue)	If you're looking for my son, he's not at home
Está encima de todo	It's on top of everything
Yo soy el que está ahí (LS, Sp., dialogue)	I'm the one who's on the spot (i.e. 'there'/'available')

(1) 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 (JLB, Arg., dialogue)	This is where Carretas Square used to be
—¿Dónde es Puebla? —preguntó Eusebio (SG, Mex., dialogue)	'Where is Puebla?' Eusebio asked

Estar would also be correct in the previous three examples. *Ser* would be impossible for a portable or moveable item, as in *tu portátil/laptop está en el armario* 'your laptop is in the cupboard/closet'.

33.3.3 *Estar de*

Estar de + adjective or noun can be used to indicate mood, temporary employment or situation:

Está de buen/mal humor	(S)he's in a good/bad mood
Cuenta la razón por la que estuvo de mesero y auxiliar de cocina (*El Heraldo*, Col.) (*mesero* = *camarero* in Spain)	He tells why he worked as a waiter and kitchen help
Están de veraneo	They're taking their summer vacation
A las tres necesitamos estar de regreso en la oficina (EP, Mex., dialogue)	We need to be back at the office by three
Estás de un guapo subido/de un antipático/de broma/de buen humor . . .	You're looking really good /You're in a really bad mood/joking/in a good mood

33.3.4 *Estar con*

Estar followed by *con* + noun:

Estoy en cama con gripe (*Revista Uno*, Arg.)	I'm in bed with the flu
¿Puedo tomar helados cuando estoy con tos o resfriado? (*AméricaTV*, Pe.)	Can I eat ice cream when I've got a cough or cold?
Estaba con un traje de chaqueta muy bonito	She was wearing a very attractive suit
Estoy contigo	I support you/I'm with you
Mi simpatía está con los conservadores	I support/back the conservatives

33.3.5 *Estar* + adverb

Estar followed by an adverb or an adjective used as an adverb:

—¿Cómo estás? —Estoy bien/mal	How are you?' 'I'm well/not well'
El nombre está mal. Se llamaba Luis José	The name is wrong. His name was Luis José
Ese día los técnicos llegaron, revisaron las conexiones y estaban fatal (*LaMula*, Pe.)	The technical experts arrived that day, checked the connections and they were awful.

(1) Adverbs are invariable in form, e.g. *estamos mal* 'we're in trouble'/'we're in a bad way', *están mejor/peor* 'they're feeling /looking better/worse' (*mejor* and *peor* are here the comparative forms of the adverbs *bien* and *mal*).

33.3.6 *Estar que*

Está que muerde	(S)he's in a lousy mood (lit. 'ready to bite')
Hoy estás que no hay quien te aguante	You're unbearable today
Aquí el aire está que congela (MS, Mex., dialogue)	The air's freezing here today

33.3.7 *Estar* meaning 'to suit', or 'to fit'

Este vestido me está muy bien	This dress suits me/fits well
El abrigo te está corto	The coat is too short for you
El puesto de ministro le está grande	The ministerial job is too big for him/her

For *estar* with *por* and *para* see 38.16.8.

33.3.8 Idiomatic use of *andar*, *ir*, *encontrarse* and *hallarse* for *estar*

Andar 'to walk' is sometimes used in colloquial language instead of *estar* when the subject is human. This is only possible when the phrase refers to some kind of activity, usually temporary, or to the way one dresses or behaves. One could not say **ando calvo* for *estoy calvo* 'I'm bald':

Miguel dice que andan recelosos y no le falta razón (MD, Sp., dialogue)	Miguel says they're suspicious, and he's right
Andan muy atareados estos días	They've got a lot of work these days
No se da cuenta de que todos los hombres andan locos por ella . . . (ES, Mex., dialogue)	She doesn't realize that all the men are crazy about her
¿Cómo andas? (= *¿cómo estás?*)	How are things?/How are you doing?
No le ponía atención por andar todo el tiempo en reuniones feministas (DES, Mex., dialogue. Sp. *no le prestaba atención*)	She neglected him because she was in feminist meetings all the time

Ir 'to go' is also often used instead of *estar* with certain adjectives and participles, especially when movement is involved:

Ella era joven, iba bien vestida, muy abrigada, llevaba el pelo suelto y ningún maquillaje (AGr, Sp.)	She was young, well-dressed, warmly clad, with her hair loose and no make-up
Era evidente que no iba armado (MS, Mex.)	It was obvious that he wasn't armed
El que iba de negro viajaba de copiloto (ibid., dialogue)	The one in black was travelling as the co-driver [of a truck]
Telefoneé desde el coche que iba conduciendo Arnau (LS, Sp.)	I called from the car that Arnau was driving

(1) *Andar* is also sometimes used colloquially (at least in Spain) to refer to non-living things that can easily be moved about, e.g. *no sé dónde andarán mis gafas* 'I don't know where my glasses have got to', *¿dónde anda el coche, tú?* (MD, Sp., dialogue) 'Hey, whereabouts is the car?'

(2) *Encontrarse* can mean the same as *estar*: *¿dónde se encuentra el museo?* 'where's the museum?', *¿qué tal te encuentras?* 'how are you/how do you feel?', *nuestros servidores se encuentran conectados a seis proveedores de backbone* (advert., Arg.) 'our servers are linked to six backbone service providers', *. . . que no hicieron el viaje por encontrarse lesionados* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) '. . .who didn't make the journey because they were injured'. *Hallarse* is the same as *encontrarse* but less common in spoken language: *su mesa se hallaba ocupada, de manera que se instaló donde pudo* (EM, Mex.) 'his [usual] table was occupied so he sat where he could'.

33.4 *Ser* or *estar*?

33.4.1 *Ser* and *estar* more or less interchangeable

(**a**) With words indicating marital status either verb can be used, though *estar* is more usual. The difference between *estoy casado* and *soy casado* is about the same as between 'I'm married' and 'I'm a married man':

Sale con una chica que es/está divorciada	(S)he's going out with a girl who's divorced
Tiene que mantener a su madre que es/está viuda	(S)he has to keep/look after his/her mother who's a widow
—¿Y tú eres casada? —Fui, hace muchos años (EM, Mex., dialogue)	'And are you married?' 'I was, many years ago'
Pero si es casado debe estar cenando en casa a estas horas (MP, Arg., dialogue; or *está casado*)	But if he's married (i.e. 'a married man') he must be at home having his dinner at this time of day

One could ask a stranger *¿es* (or *está*) *usted casado?* 'are you married?', but two friends meeting again after some time would say *¿estás casado?* or *¿todavía estás soltero?* 'are you married?' or 'are you still single?' because the enquiry is about a change since the last meeting.

In this example, which refers to a temporary marriage, only *estar* is possible: *estuve casado con una feminista que me obligó a respetar su independencia* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'I was married (for a time) to a feminist who made me respect her independence'.

(**b**) With *calvo*, *gordo*, *delgado* and *alto*, *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!	Good heavens, haven't you got thin!
Siempre ha sido calvo/gordo, pero ahora está más calvo/gordo que nunca	He's always been bald/fat but now he's balder/fatter than ever
Dentro de cien años todos seremos calvos (LRS, PR)	We'll all be bald in a hundred years
¿Te has fijado que está gordo . . . y además calvo? (GZ, Mex., dialogue)	Did you notice that he's fat . . . and bald as well?
Un periodista güero que antes era gordo me daba buenas propinas (EM, Mex., dialogue In Spain *güero* = *rubio*)	A blond journalist who was previously fat gave me good tips (money, not information)
Las mujeres de esa tribu son muy delgadas (generalization)	The women of that tribe are very slim

(c) With adjectives applied to events and *vida* and *situación*:

La conferencia fue/estuvo muy interesante	The lecture was very interesting
La situación es/está caótica	The situation is chaotic
La fiesta fue/estuvo muy animada	The party was very lively
La vida es/está cara hoy día	Life is expensive nowadays

But *la vida es difícil/maravillosa/amarga* 'life is difficult/wonderful/bitter' can only be general comments on life. *La vida está difícil* means 'life is difficult at the moment'.

(d) With adjectives describing social manner when 'to be' = 'to behave':

Estuvo/Fue muy cortés conmigo	(S)he was very courteous towards me
Siempre está/es cariñosa	She's always affectionate
Tienes que estar/ser más amable con él (usually *ser*)	You must be kinder to him
Si soy amable con él luego no me lo quito de encima (MS, Mex., dialogue)	If I'm nice to him I can't get rid of him later

(1) But *hoy has sido bueno* 'you've behaved well today' because *estar bueno* means 'tasty'/'appetizing' or 'sexually desirable'.

(2) *Estar* is not used for general statements about behaviour: *antes los ingleses eran muy corteses* 'formerly the English were very courteous'.

(3) *Ser* can be used to make it clear that a situation is being talked about rather than someone's behaviour: *ahora* ***era*** *mucho más serio y ella* ***estaba*** *más seria* (SP, Sp.) 'now it (the situation) was more serious and she was more serious'.

33.4.2 *Ser* and *estar* with prices and quantities

Ser is obligatory when the price or quantity is fixed:

¿Cuánto (*es lo que*) *le debo?*	How much do I owe you?
¿Cuántos somos hoy para comer?	How many are we for lunch today?
Somos doce en mi familia pero hoy solo/sólo estamos tres en casa	There are twelve of us in my family but there are only three of us at home today
Los sobrevivientes fueron pocos	There were few survivors

But either can be used for fluctuating prices:

¿A cuánto/A cómo son/están las uvas?	How much are the grapes?
Son/Están a tres euros (*con*) *veinte el kilo*	They're 3 euros 20 cents a kilo
¿A cuánto/A cómo están/son esas acciones?	What are those shares at?

33.4.3 *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	She's very good-looking/She's looking very attractive
Este niño es muy alto/Está muy alto	This child is very tall/He's grown very tall
Este sillón es ya viejo/Está ya viejo	This armchair is old/It's getting old
El pollo es riquísimo/Está riquísimo*	[The] chicken is very good/It tastes delicious
El café es horrible/Está horrible*	(The) coffee is horrible/It tastes awful
Tráelo como sea/Tráelo como esté	Bring it any way you can/Bring it as it is

(1) 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 is very good quality'. *Estar* could only mean 'to taste'.

(2) Note *tú eres/tú estás viejo para estas cosas* 'you're old/getting old for these things' (there is a slight difference of meaning in both languages). But one says *tú eres demasiado joven para estas cosas*.

33.4.4 *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:

ser aburrido	boring	*estar aburrido*	to be bored
ser atento	courteous	*estar atento*	attentive
ser bueno	good	*estar bueno*	(see 33.4.1, note 1)
ser cansado	tiresome	*estar cansado*	tired
ser católico	Catholic	*no estar católico*	unwell/furious
ser decidido	resolute	*estar decidido*	decided
ser consciente	aware	*estar consciente*	(see 33.2.3 note 3)
ser despierto	sharp/alert	*estar despierto*	awake
ser (*un*) *enfermo*	to be an invalid	*estar enfermo*	be ill/sick
ser fatal	be fatal	*estar fatal*	be/feel awful
ser fresco	be cheeky	*estar fresco*	be cool/fresh (see note 1)
ser interesado	self-seeking	*estar interesado*	interested
ser listo	clever	*estar listo*	to be ready
ser (*un*) *loco*	scatter-brained	*estar loco*	to be mad/crazy
ser malo	bad	*estar malo*	ill/sick/gone bad
ser rico	wealthy	*estar rico*	(see 33.2.3 note 2)
ser verde	green/smutty	*estar verde*	unripe
ser violento	violent/embarrassing	*estar violento*	embarrassed
ser vivo	sharp/alert	*estar vivo*	alive

(1) Note the colloquialism *estás fresco si piensas que las cosas van a cambiar* 'you're dreaming if you think things are going to change'.

34 'There is', 'there are', 'there was', 'there were', etc.

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- The forms and uses of *haber/hay* (Section 34.2.1)
- *Lo hay*, *la hay*, etc. (Section 34.2.2)
- *Hay* and *estar* compared (Section 34.3)

34.1 General

This chapter covers 'existential sentences', i.e. those that refer to the existence or non-existence of things: 'there's bread', 'there are several possibilities', 'God exists'/'there is a God', *no ha habido ningún accidente* 'there wasn't an accident', etc. In Spanish such sentences usually involve the special third-person singular of the verb *haber* (present indicative *hay*), which means 'there is/there are/were, etc.'. However, the picture is complicated by the existence of another verb, *estar*, which often means 'to be located'/'to be present'. For the much more specific spatial words *allí/allá* 'there', see 35.6.

34.2 *Haber* (*hay*)

For the conjugation of *haber* see 16.11.22.

34.2.1 Basic uses

Haber has two uses:

(**a**) as an auxiliary verb in compound tenses, e.g. ***han*** *dicho* 'they've said', ***he*** *visto* 'I've seen'. See Chapter 18;

(**b**) as a verb meaning 'there is'/'there are', 'there was/were', etc., French *il y a*, German *es gibt*.

This chapter covers the latter use of the verb, which we call *hay* to avoid confusion with the use of *haber* as an auxiliary verb. It is conjugated exactly like the latter except for the present indicative tense, which is *hay*, not *ha*. It is used only in the third person (see note 3). *Hay* can occur in any third-person singular non-continuous tense form.

It does not mean '. . . is/are/were *there*' as in 'the remote control is there' *el mando a distancia está ahí/allí.* The relationship between *hay* and *estar* is discussed further at 34.3. Examples of *hay*:

Había muchas chicas de mi edad y más jóvenes (JM, Sp.)	There were many girls of my age and younger
Hay casos peores, hay quienes no pueden volver del exilio (AM, Mex.)	There are worse cases, there are people who can't return from exile

En Madrid . . . no tenían delincuencia. Bueno, seguro habría una poca pero no era nada comparada con la de México (ES, Mex., dialogue. *Una poca* is familiar for *un poco*)	In Madrid they had no crime. Well, sure, there would be a bit, but it was nothing compared with Mexico
¿Qué hay? (*¿Qué hubo?*/*¿Quiubo?* in familiar language from Colombia northwards, including Mexico)	What's happening?/How're things?
Hubo muchas noches que salíamos a recorrer su barrio (GCI, Cu. dialogue)	There were many nights when we went out for a walk round her part of town
Había una vez . . . /érase una vez . . . (*érase* is here a grammatically unusual set formula)	Once upon a time there was . . .

(1) Important: *hay* has no plural in European Spanish and in formal Spanish everywhere: ***había** tres chicas* 'there were three girls', not ?*habían . . .*; ***hubo** clases de italiano el año pasado* 'there were Italian classes last year', not ?*hubieron . . .* But the plural construction is common in and near Catalonia and in the Americas, where it is deep-rooted and probably spreading in spontaneous, even educated, speech. It is avoided in formal language: *pero nadie llamaba para pedir el rescate y no **había** novedades ni pistas* (MS, Mex.) 'but no one was calling to ask for a ransom and there was no news and no clues'. The Academy recommends the singular. The form *hubieron* for *hubo* is less common than *habían* for *había*.

(2) *Hay* is used only in the third person, whatever its tense: *hay cinco* 'there are five', but *somos cinco* 'there are five of us', *ustedes eran cinco* 'there were five of you', *son cinco* 'there are five of them', *—No hay nadie —Bueno, estamos yo y el gato* '"there's no one here." "Well, there's me and the cat"' (never **hay yo/hay tú/hay nosotros*, etc.).

A first-person plural construction, e.g. ?*habemos cinco = somos cinco* 'there are five of us' (n.b. not the usual form *hemos*) occurs in popular speech in Spain and more often in popular Latin-American speech, cf. *en el patio habíamos dos parejas bailando* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'there were two of us couples dancing in the patio'. This construction is rejected by careful speakers. See also 34.3.3.

(3) Important: *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 . . .' ?*Hay el cartero* for *ha venido el cartero* 'the postman's there'/'the postman's come' is a typical Catalanism.

(4) Important: *hay* is also not followed by the nominalizer *el que/la que/los que/las que*, for which see Chapter 40. One can say *hay quienes prefieren las lentejas con salsa caldosa* 'some prefer lentils in a watery/thin sauce', but not **hay los que prefieren . . .* Compare *hay quien juega lento y no cede el paso* (CP, Arg.) 'there are some people who play slowly and don't let others get past' (in golf), *eres un niño que vive en las nubes y que de allá no hay quien te baje* (LR, Col.) 'you're a child who lives in the clouds and there's no one who can bring you down from there', *pero por la gente de fuera no hay quien responda* (MS, Mex., dialogue) 'but there's no one can answer for the people who are not from here'.

(5) For *hay que* 'it is necessary to' see 25.4.2.

34.2.2 Direct object pronouns and *hay*

Hay functions like a transitive verb, and since transitive verbs in Spanish must usually have a direct object, a direct object pronoun is normally used before *hay* to indicate the presence of a deleted noun:

No hubo presiones, ni las hay, ni las habrá (interview in *El País*, Sp.)	There wasn't any pressure, there isn't any and there won't be
El cochero quiso asegurarse de que no había ningún error. No lo había (GGM, Col. Refers to a horse-drawn carriage)	The coach driver sought reassurance that there was no mistake. There wasn't
—¿Existe una fórmula para obtener éxito en la vida? —Sí, la hay (JV, Mex., dialogue)	'Is there a formula for being successful in life?' 'Yes, there is'.

(1) The direct object pronoun is not used when answering questions about the existence of non-countable things (bread, water, justice, etc.): *—¿Hay azúcar? —Sí, hay* '"Is there any sugar?" "Yes, there is"', *—¿Hay mucho que hacer? —Sí, hay.* '"Is there a lot to do?" "Yes, there is."' Compare this reference to countable items: *—¿Hay problemas? —**Los** hay y muchos* '"Are there any problems?" "There are. Plenty"'. Omission of the pronoun in the latter context, e.g. *—Hay y muchos* is considered typical of familiar or popular speech. See 8.4.2 for resumptive pronouns with *ser*, *estar*, *parecer*.

34.3 *Hay* and *estar* in existential sentences

Estar has many other uses, discussed in detail in Chapter 33.

As far as its relationship with *hay* is concerned, *está* basically means '. . . is somewhere' and *hay* means 'there is/are . . .' (i.e. 'there exists'). In certain cases, the meanings overlap, as in *—¿El Sr. Ramírez? —No está—. ¿Y su mujer? —No está nadie/No hay nadie* '"Mr Ramírez?" "He's not in." "What about his wife?" "There's no one in."' On entering an apparently empty building one shouts *¿hay alguien?* 'is there any one around?'/'is anyone there?'

34.3.1 Uses of *estar* and *hay* with defined nouns

Nouns accompanied by the definite article, by a possessive adjective or by a demonstrative (*este*, *ese*, *aquel*) normally require *estar*. *Hay* used with such noun phrases is restricted in its meaning to 'exists', as explained at 34.2.1 note 3. *Estar* takes for granted that the subject exists and tells us about its location or availability:

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?	Do you have Spanish omelette/US omelet?
¿Está la tortilla española?	Is the Spanish omelette on the list?/Is the Spanish omelette ready?
Predominaban las tiendas pequeñas, aunque por supuesto había ya las grandes (JA, Mex.)	There were mainly small shops/stores, although there were the big ones
No se pueden subir ni perros ni cosas . . . para eso está el montacargas (EA, Sp., dialogue)	You can't take up dogs and things . . . The service lift is there for that
Las mujeres no estaban para hablar de temas que no fueran domésticos (AM, Mex.)	Women weren't there to discuss non-domestic subjects

In this last example, *no había mujeres para hablar . . .* would have meant 'there were no women there to talk about . . .'.

(1) In relative clauses, *hay* and *estar* seem to be interchangeable when material objects are involved: *tropecé con la silla que* ***estaba/había*** *en el dormitorio* 'I tripped over the chair that was in the bedroom', *. . . del espejo que había sobre la chimenea* (CMG, Sp., or *estaba*) '. . . from the mirror hanging over the fireplace', *el sitio estratégico es la mesa que hay al lado de la cristalera que da a la calle* (EA, Sp., dialogue; or *está*) 'the strategic place is the table next to the window looking out onto the street'. But with nouns referring to abstract things only *hay* is possible: *las posibilidades de inversión que hay en* (*la*) *Argentina* 'the investment opportunities that there are in Argentina'. See the next section.

(2) In this exchange, *—¿Qué hay en este pueblo? —Hay/Está* ***la*** *iglesia . . .* '"What is there in this village?" "There's the church . . ."', *hay* is possible with the definite article because it answers the question 'what things exist?' However, Latin Americans may insist on *está* in this sentence.

34.3.2 *Estar* for mobile things

As we have said, *estar* implies that a thing is present in a certain place, *hay* merely that it exists. For this reason, words like 'problem', 'question', 'atmosphere', 'accident' can only appear with *hay* since they do not refer to locatable or moveable things:

Ha habido un accidente	There's been an accident
Ha habido aquí tres presidentes (i.e. 'have existed')	There have been three presidents here/ We've had three presidents (in this country)
¿Es que en España no hay problemas de empleo? (interview, *La Jornada*, Mex.)	Are there no employment problems in Spain?

but –

Han estado aquí tres presidentes	Three presidents have been here

34.3.3 *Hay* used before partitive nouns and numbers

Before partitive nouns (quantities, parts of a whole), only *hay* can be used:

Hay leche	There's (some) milk
Sólo hay agua vieja, agua de salitre (CF, Mex., CREA)	There's only old water, water full of saltpetre (or 'salts')
Había gente	There were (some) people
No hay champú	There's no shampoo

Since *hay* can be used only in the third person (see 34.2.1, note 2), *ser* or *estar* must be used for other persons:

Éramos cuarenta en la fiesta (GZ, Mex., dialogue)	There were forty **of us** at the party
Los que estábamos ahí nos quedamos callados	Those of us who were there kept quiet
Estábamos más de cinco personas encerradas en el ascensor	There were more than five of us shut in the lift

34.4 Miscellaneous English sentences whose translation requires *hay* or *estar*

If there hadn't been a doctor (available), he'd have died	*Si no hubiera habido* (*un*) *médico, habría muerto/De no haber habido* (*un*) *médico, habría muerto*
If the doctor hadn't been **there**, he'd have died	*Si no hubiera* ***estado*** *el médico, habría muerto*
There's no such thing as fairies	*Las hadas no existen/No hay hadas/No existen las hadas*
There have always been economic crises	*Siempre ha habido crisis económicas*
Horchata available/*Horchata* sold here	*Hay horchata* (a refreshing drink made from crushed tiger nuts or *chufas*)
There's a book on the table	*Hay un libro encima de la mesa*
The book isn't there any more	*El libro ya no está ahí*

35 Adverbs

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- Adverbs ending in *-mente* (Section 35.2)
- Adverbs not ending in *–mente* (Section 35.3)
- Adverbial use of adjectives and nouns (Section 35.3.3–7)
- Intensifiers and moderators (*muy*, *algo*, *increíblemente*, *sí*, *si*, etc.) (Section 35.4)
- *Aquí*, *acá*, *ahí*, *allí*, *allá* (Section 35.6.1–4)
- *Dentro/adentro*, *fuera/afuera* (Section 35.6.5)
- Adverbs of place (*abajo*, *debajo de*, *arriba*, *encima*, *detrás*, *delante*, *adelante*) (Section 35.6.6–8)
- Adverbs of time (*ya*, *recién*, *todavía*, *aún*, *luego*, *entonces*, etc.) (Section 35.7)
- Words meaning 'even' (*incluso*, *aun*, *hasta*, etc.) (Section 35.8)

35.1 General

Spanish adverbs and adverbial phrases can be divided into two large classes:

(**a**) adverbs formed from adjectives by adding the suffix *-mente* to an adjective, e.g. *tranquilamente* 'tranquilly', *violentamente* 'violently', *naturalmente* 'naturally';
(b) invariable words and phrases like *mal* 'badly', *bien* 'well', *ayer* 'yesterday', *adrede* (familiar language *aposta*) 'on purpose', *en serio* 'seriously' (i.e. not jokingly), *aquí* 'here', etc.

A few adjectives can also function as adverbs: *hablaban fuerte* 'they were talking loudly'; see 35.3.3. Much more common in Spanish than in English 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 35.3.4.

35.2 Adverbs in *-mente*

Adverbs formed by adding *-mente* to an adjective are very numerous:

Lo del médico había sido sencillamente horrible (AG, Sp.)	The business with the doctor had been simply dreadful
Siguió hasta el final para desahogarse totalmente (ES, Mex.)	He carried on [talking] right to the end so as to get it off his chest completely
Desgraciadamente no han vuelto a llamar	Unfortunately they haven't called back
Pero en el futuro no estamos solamente vos y yo (MB, Ur., dialogue; Sp. *tú y yo*)	But there won't be only you and me in the future
. . . muy inteligente, buen abogado, pero sumamente peligroso (GGM, Col., dialogue)	. . . very intelligent, a good lawyer, but extremely dangerous

35.2.1 Formation of adverbs ending in *-mente*

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	
absoluto	*absoluta*	*absolutamente*	absolutely
extremo	*extrema*	*extremamente*	extremely
evidente	(*evidente*)	*evidentemente*	evidently
cortés	(*cortés*)	*cortésmente*	courteously
tenaz	(*tenaz*)	*tenazmente*	tenaciously

35.2.2 Accent rules for adverbs in *-mente*

Adjectives that make adverbs in *-mente* are pronounced with two stress accents, one on the vowel that was originally stressed (any written accent is retained), another on the first *e* of *-ente* (audible, but not shown in writing): *inevitable/inevit**a**blem**e**nte* 'inevitable'/'inevitably', *crítico/críticam**e**nte* 'critical'/'critically', *electrónico/electr**ó**nicam**e**nte* 'electronic'/'electronically', *hábil/h**á**bilm**e**nte* 'skilful'/'skilfully', etc.

35.2.3 Consecutive adverbs in *-mente*

Important: if more than one adverb in *-mente* is joined by a conjunction (e.g. *y*, *ni*, *o*, *pero*, etc.), *-mente* is dropped from all but the last:

ni intelectual, ni política, ni económicamente se puede mantener tal postura (*El País*, Sp.)	and neither intellectually, nor politically, nor economically can such a position be maintained
La inflación se encuentra total y absolutamente controlada (*El Economista*, Mex.)	Inflation is totally and absolutely under control
Significa mucho personalmente, pero también cultural e intelectualmente (*Granma*, Cu.)	It means a lot personally, but also culturally and intellectually

(1) This rule is also applied in comparative phrases like *más ampulosa que profundamente* 'more pompously than profoundly', *lo explicó tan clara como sinceramente* '(s)he explained it as clearly as (s)he did sincerely'.

(2) This is an important rule of written Spanish but it is often ignored in spontaneous speech. It is not applied when there is no joining conjunction: *y así, separados por el muro de vidrio, habíamos vivido ansiosamente, melancólicamente* (ES, Arg.) 'and thus, separated by the wall of glass, we had lived anxiously, melancholically'.

35.2.4 Limits on the use of the suffix *-mente*

-mente cannot be added to all adjectives, although there is no accounting for experiments like Julio Cortázar's invention *pelirrojamente* 'red-hairedly' in his novel *Rayuela*.

With a few exceptions (cf. *difícil/difícilmente* 'difficult'/'with difficulty', *lleno* 'full', but 'fully' = *plenamente*), the set of Spanish adjectives that take *-mente* corresponds to the set of English adjectives that end in -ly. These are chiefly adverbs of manner or behaviour, so 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* 'Argentinian', *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 way', *murió cristianamente a los noventa años* '(s)he died a Christian death at the age of ninety'.

(**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', *importante* 'important', and most adjectives in *-ón, cf. mandón* 'bossy', *peleón* 'aggressive'/'prone to start fights', *pidón* 'always asking favours'.

(**e**) Many verbal participles which cannot, because of their meaning, function as adverbs, e.g. *roto* 'broken', which has no adverbial form ***rotamente* 'brokenly'. However, some Spanish participles take *-mente*: the following are some of the many examples. They all refer to behaviour or manner:

abatido: *abatidamente* downcast
abierto: *abiertamente* open(ly)
acentuado: *acentuadamente* marked(ly)
atrevido: *atrevidamente* daring(ly)
debido: *debidamente* due/duly
decidido: *decididamente* decided(ly)
deliberado: *deliberadamente* deliberate(ly)
equivocado: *equivocadamente* mistaken(ly)
exagerado: *exageradamente* exaggerated(ly)
irritado: *irritadamente* irritated(ly)
perdido: ('lost') *perdidamente* hopeless(ly) (e.g. in love)
reiterado: *reiteradamente* repeated(ly)
resuelto: *resueltamente* resolute(ly)

35.2.5 Colloquial forms

Colloquial forms like *buenamente* and *malamente* are occasionally heard in familiar speech with specialized meanings:

Lo terminamos, pero malamente	We finished it, but it was rushed
Hazlo buenamente cuando puedas	Do it in your own time when you can

(1) *Otramente* 'otherwise' (virtually obsolete and replaced by *de otra manera*) and ?*mismamente*, cf. ?*mismamente el cura* 'the priest himself', are considered substandard or humorous. The forms *mayormente* 'especially'/'mainly' is more acceptable in Latin America: *las mujeres mayormente hacen trabajo doméstico no remunerado* (*La Jornada*, Mex., i.e. *principalmente*) 'the women mainly do unpaid domestic work'.

(2) *Buenamente* can also mean 'willingly', 'as well as possible' or 'easily': *cada cual sobrelleva la derrota como buenamente puede* (*La Nación*, Arg.) 'everyone copes with defeat as best they can', *pasaba las noches donde buenamente podía* (*El País*, Spain) 'he spent the night wherever he could' (i.e. 'slept rough'), *lo que buenamente se puede hacer es una versión del libro* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'what one can easily make (i.e. without too much effort) is a version of the book'.

35.2.6 Equivalents of adverbs in *-mente*

The existence of an adverb ending in *-mente* does not mean that the adjective from which it is formed cannot also be used in an adverbial phrase with the same or a similar meaning. Constant reading and dictionary work are the only solutions to this problem, e.g.:

en vano/vanamente	in vain
de inmediato/inmediatamente	immediately
directo/directamente	directly
Siempre obra locamente/a lo loco	(S)he always acts wildly/in a mad way

(1) One says *locamente/perdidamente enamorado/a* 'madly in love', not **enamorado a lo loco.*

35.2.7 Too many adverbs in *-mente*

It is bad style to include too many adverbs ending in *-mente* in a single paragraph: the final syllables set off ugly rhymes. The horrible 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*.

(1) Important: an adverb ending in *-mente* must not be used to modify another: **increíblemente rápidamente* for 'incredibly quickly' is not Spanish: *con una rapidez increíble*. See 35.4.3.

35.2.8 *-ísimamente*

The suffix *-ísimo* (see 5.8) may be added (judiciously) to adverbs of manner, and time. The result is very emphatic: *sobre todo a las mujeres nos trataban malísimamente* (*Revista de la Universidad de México*) 'above all they treated us women really badly'. More examples:

claramente	*clarísimamente*	extremely clearly
intensamente	*intensísimamente*	extremely intensely
recientemente	*recientísimamente*	extremely recently
urgentemente	*urgentísimamente*	extremely urgently

(1) Common alternatives exist, e.g. *con gran claridad*, *con enorme intensidad*, *con gran urgencia*, etc.

(2) *Lejos* and *cerca* can also have *-ísimo* added to them: *lejísimos* 'far, far away' (note the final *s*) and *cerquísima* 'really close'.

35.2.9 Adverbs in *-mente* to mean 'from a . . . point of view'

Adverbs in *-mente* are freely used to indicate point of view, a common construction in journalistic styles:

Económicamente, este país va a la ruina	Economically, this country is heading for ruin
Políticamente, Planck nunca simpatizó con la democracia (JV, Mex., dialogue)	Politically, Planck never sympathized with democracy
Personalmente, lo dudo	Personally, I doubt it
Editorialmente, lo apruebo	From a publishing point of view, I approve

35.3 Adverbs not ending in *-mente*

35.3.1 General

These include words like *bien* 'well', *mal* 'badly', *despacio* 'slowly', *pronto* 'quickly', *adrede/aposta* 'on purpose', *igual* 'the same', *bastante* 'enough'/'fairly', *demasiado* 'too'. There are regional differences of usage, e.g. *deprisa* 'quickly' in Spain and *aprisa* in Latin America: the latter is considered popular by some Spaniards, but *quiero ir muy aprisa* (AM, Mex., dialogue; Sp. *deprisa*) 'I want to go very fast'.

Adverbs of place (*aquí*, *allí*, *dentro*, *fuera*, etc.) are discussed at 35.6 and adverbs of time (*ya*, *entonces*, *luego*, *recién*, etc.) at 35.7.

There are many adverbial phrases: *a propósito* 'deliberately', *en balde* 'in vain', *a contrapelo* 'unwillingly', *en serio* 'seriously'. A selection appears at 35.3.2.

These adverbs, and also those ending in *-mente*, can modify verbs, participles or adjectives:

Hable despacio por favor	Speak slowly please
Lo quieren así	They want it that way
Esto está mal hecho	This is badly made/This is the wrong thing to do
Está bien	It/He/She's OK/You're OK
Me da igual	It's all the same to me
Aquí estamos mejor/peor	We're better/worse (off) here
Infórmese gratis (advert., Sp.)	Get information free
—Era totalmente desequilibrada— volvió a comentar (EP, Mex., dialogue)	'She was completely unbalanced', he remarked again

Intensifiers like *muy* 'very', *bastante* 'fairly', can modify other adverbs: *muy lejos/cerca* 'very far/near', *bastante lejos* 'pretty far away'.

A few can even modify nouns:

*¿No te das cuenta que una mujer **así** no puede ser aristócrata?* (SV, Ch., dialogue; Sp. usually *cuenta de que*)	Don't you realize that a woman like that can't be an aristocrat?
Visiones así no se olvidan (MS, Mex., dialogue)	You don't forget sights like that
una niña bien (pejorative)	a 'nice' girl/a girl from a 'respectable' or 'posh' family
dos coñacs con hielo, y dos cafés igual	two cognacs with ice, and two coffees the same way

(1) *Bien* and *así de* can modify adjectives when they are used as intensifiers. See 35.4.9.

(2) *Deprisa* can be spelled *de prisa*. but the Academy, DPD 214, prefers *deprisa*.

35.3.2 Adverbial phrases of manner

Important: these are numerous, and they often provide an elegant alternative to an unwieldy adverb in *-mente*. The following is a small sample:

a buen paso at a smart pace
a caballo on horseback
a ciegas blindly
a conciencia conscientiously
(*el agua sale*) *a chorros* The water's pouring out
a destiempo inopportunely
(*entrar*) *a empujones* to push one's way in
a escondidas secretly/clandestinely
a fuego lento on a low flame
a hurtadillas by stealth
al alimón together by turns/jointly
a la carrera at full speed
a la fuerza by force
a la ligera hastily/without proper thought
a las claras without beating about the bush
(*llorar*) *a lágrima viva* to shed floods of tears
a mano by hand
a máquina machine-made/by machine
a matacaballo at breakneck speed
a medias by halves
a oscuras in the dark
a quemarropa point-blank
a regañadientes reluctantly/unwillingly

a sabiendas de que… fully aware that …
a tiempo in time (e.g. for the train)
a tientas by touch/by feel
a traición treacherously
al raso in the open/out of doors
al sereno in the open/'under the stars'
al tuntún without thinking/at random
bajo cuerda on the sly/in an underhand way
con delirio/locura madly/passionately
con frecuencia/a menudo frequently
de balde free (= without paying)
de buenas a primeras suddenly/without thinking it through
de camino on the way
de continuo continuously
de corrido at one go/straight off
de costumbre usually
de golpe suddenly
de improviso unexpectedly
de memoria (learn) by heart
de ordinario normally/usually
de puntillas on tiptoe
de rodillas kneeling
de seguro for certain/for sure
de sobra in excess/more than enough
(*leer algo*) *de un tirón* to read something in one sitting/straight through
de verdad really/genuinely
en balde in vain/pointlessly
en cambio on the other hand
en confianza confidentially
en cueros stark naked
en el acto on the spot
en lo sucesivo from now on/hereafter
(*hablar*) *por los codos* to talk nonsense
río abajo/río arriba down/upstream
sin empacho coolly/unconcernedly
sin reserva unreservedly
sin ton ni son willy-nilly/thoughtlessly

35.3.3 Adverbs derived from adjectives and participles

A few adverbs are identical in form to masculine singular adjectives. Like all adverbs, their form is invariable except for the occasional addition of a diminutive suffix as in *ahorita* 'right now' (Latin-American). They are used only with certain verbs, e.g. *hablar/pronunciar claro* 'to speak/pronounce clearly' but only *expresarse claramente/con claridad* 'to express oneself clearly':

Hablan alto/bajo	They talk loudly/softly
Lo hemos comprado barato/caro	We've bought it cheap/dear
El tren va directo a Tuy	The train goes direct to Tuy
A la niña no le gustaron y lloró más fuerte (ES, Mex.)	The little girl didn't like them and she cried louder
Se me apiló firme (JC, Arg., dialogue. Spain *se me arrimó*)	He pushed himself tight up against me
Anda rápido que vamos a llegar tarde (see 35.3.6 for *rápido*)	Walk fast or we'll arrive late
Respiraba hondo	(S)he was breathing deeply
Me sentó fatal	It didn't agree with me at all/I didn't like it all
Él no juega limpio	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	We had a tremendous/fantastic time
La chaqueta le sienta bárbaro a Mariluz	The jacket looks terrific on Mariluz
Inicialmente pensé que podíamos haber conseguido unos dólares fácil, sin problemas para la revolución (*VdC*, Cu.)	Initially I thought we could easily have got a few dollars without any problems for the Revolution

(1) Colloquial Latin-American Spanish provides numerous examples unacceptable in Spain: . . . *un gran número de mexicanos que piensan distinto que el PRI* (*Excélsior*, Mex., i.e. *de manera distinta*)

'. . . a large number of Mexicans who think differently from the PRI' (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*), *¡qué bonito baila!* (AM, Mex., Sp. *¡qué bien baila!*) 'how beautifully she dances!'.

(2) *Seguido* is much used for 'frequently'/'repeatedly' in Latin America: *dos muchachos del balé del Faraón que me vienen a visitar seguido o me invitan a su departamento* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'two boys from the "ballet Faraón" who keep coming to visit me or invite me to their apartment' (*departamento* = *piso* or *apartamento* in Spain). *Seguido* is also used in this way in familiar speech in Spain.

35.3.4 Adjectives used to modify both subject and verb

Spanish often uses adjectives in combination with verbs to produce an effect more easily expressed by an adverb in English: the adjective agrees with the number and gender of the subject. This construction makes 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 wearily', which modifies 'sleep' but not 'girls'.

This construction is obviously limited to adjectives that can equally well apply to a noun and an action, e.g. *inocente* 'innocent', *confuso* 'confused', *feliz* 'happy', *desconcertado* 'disconcerted', *aliviado* 'relieved'; but not to adjectives like *harapiento* 'ragged' or *azul* 'blue', which cannot describe an action:

Sonrió tranquila (JM, Sp.)	She smiled gently
. . . preguntó el reportero, insistente (JV, Mex., dialogue. *Reportero* = *periodista* in Spain)	. . . the reporter asked, insistently/eagerly
Javier miraba atónito desde el vagón vacío (MB, Ur.)	Javier gazed in surprise from the empty carriage
Me extendió un papel que leí asombrado (ABE, Pe., same as *. . . leí con asombro*	He handed me a paper that I read in amazement
Viven felices (normal style))	They live happily

35.3.5 Nouns used adverbially

For familiar constructions like *llover cantidad*, *divertirse horrores* see 35.4.7.

35.3.6 *Rápido*

Rápido is an adjective and it is correctly used in phrases like *tren rápido* 'fast train', *comidas rápidas* 'fast food'. As an adverb it is colloquial but spreading; *rápidamente*, *pronto* and *deprisa* are formal adverbial forms: *¡rápido* (*deprisa/pronto*), *que se va el tren!* 'quick, the train's going!', *¡fuera! ¡Rápido!* 'get out! Quick!'. *Rápido* sounds colloquial to Spanish ears in this headline from Mexico: *acelera tu metabolismo y pierde peso muy rápido* 'speed up your metabolism and lose weight really fast'. Spaniards would probably write *rápidamente* but adverbial *rápido* is spreading.

35.3.7 *A la* and *a lo*

Both may form adverbial phrases of manner, but *a lo*, tends to predominate in set phrases of a derogatory nature:

tortilla a la francesa	plain omelette/US omelet
lenguado a la normanda	sole à la normande

El apagón a la Mexicana (*Excélsior*, Mex.)	The Mexican-style power-cut/power outage
despedirse a la francesa	to leave without saying goodbye
Viven todavía a la antigua	They still live in the old style
Ando un poco a la defensiva (CMG, Sp., dialogue)	I'm feeling a bit on the defensive
Yo soy la mejor preparada porque sé idiomas y ustedes tararean a lo bruto sin saberse las letras de las canciones (ES, Mex., dialogue)	I'm the best prepared because I know languages and you guys just sing la-la-la any old how without knowing the words

(1) And also *a lo grande* 'in a big way', *a lo bestia* 'crudely', *a lo tonto* 'stupidly', *a lo loco* 'madly', *a lo Drácula* 'Dracula-style', etc.

(2) *En plan . . .* is familiar, like '-style': *viajar en plan hippy* 'to travel rough/hippy-style', *hablar en plan Tarzan* 'to talk Tarzan-style'.

(3) Two common adverbial phrases are *a lo lejos* 'in the distance' and *a lo largo* 'throughout'/'all along' as in *a lo largo de 2019* 'throughout 2019', *a lo largo de la costa* 'all along the coast'.

35.3.8 Note on position of adverbs of manner (see also 42.8)

An adverb of manner usually follows an intransitive verb:

Trabaja intensivamente en una segunda novela	(S)he is working very hard on a second novel
El aeropuerto de Cancún . . . servía principalmente para repostar combustible (AH, Mex.)	Cancún airport was used mainly for refuelling
Esa cara de asco que parece ser habitualmente la suya	That look of disgust which seems habitually to be his/hers

But, less commonly, an adverb may precede the verb to add emphasis:

Tu vida inevitablemente se dispone a recorrer el tramo final (JM, Sp., dialogue)	Your life is inevitably getting itself ready for the last lap

(1) In a transitive sentence, an adverb may follow the object – *habla griego correctamente* – or the verb – *habla correctamente* ***el*** *griego* '(s)he speaks Greek perfectly/without making mistakes'; there is no noticeable change of meaning here, but note the definite article *el*. 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 *comían riñones con fruición* 'they ate kidneys with relish/eagerly', but *comían con fruición riñones . . .* is the appropriate order if more items follow, e.g. *hígado*/liver, *salchichas*/sausages, etc.

35.4 Intensifiers and moderators

35.4.1 General

Intensifiers and moderators strengthen or weaken the force of a verb, adverb, adjective and, occasionally, noun. Typical intensifiers are *muy* 'very', *mucho/poco* 'much'/'little', *intensamente* 'intensely', *extremadamente* 'extremely', *algo/más bien* 'rather', *increíblemente* 'incredibly', *sobremanera* 'exceedingly' (literary). Many intensifiers have other functions, and are dealt with elsewhere, e.g. *algo* and *más bien* at 10.2, *demasiado* at 10.9, *mucho* and *poco* at 10.12.

New colloquial intensifiers appear and vanish as fashion dictates. *Requete* used to be a popular prefix and has created permanent expressions like *requeteguapo/a* 'really good-looking' and *requetebién* 'really well': *les está yendo requetebién* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'things are going really great for them [i.e. the super-rich]'. *Archi-* can still be found in *archiconocido/archisabido* 'very well known'. Nowadays many adjectives can be reinforced in colloquial styles by *super-*: *supertonto/superinteligente* 'really stupid'/'really intelligent'.

35.4.2 *Muy*

Muy 'very' is originally an abbreviated form of *mucho*, and the full form should be used when it stands alone:

Es muy inteligente	(S)he's very intelligent
—¿Es inteligente? —Sí, mucho	'Is (s)he intelligent?' 'Yes, very'
—¿Es atrabancado desde joven? —Mucho, pero ahora no deja a sus escoltas (EM, Mex., dialogue. *Atrabancado = atrevido/imprudente* in Spain)	'Has he been reckless since he was young?' 'Very. But now he doesn't leave his bodyguards behind'

(1) *Muy* cannot be used with *más* 'more', *menos* 'less', *mejor* 'better' or *peor* 'worse': one says *mucho más/menos/mejor/peor*. For more about *mucho más/menos* see 10.12b. *Muy mucho* is humorous.

(2) The expression *muy de* should be noted: *no soy muy de ir a fiestas* 'I'm not a great party-goer', *esa calle es muy de cafeterías* 'that street has loads of cafés', *es muy de izquierdas/derechas* '(s)he's very left-wing/right-wing'.

35.4.3 Intensifiers in *-mente*

There are numerous intensifiers ending in *-mente*, e.g. *sumamente* 'exceedingly', *increíblemente* 'incredibly', *tremendamente* 'tremendously', *fenomenalmente* 'phenomenally', etc. As was mentioned earlier, these cannot modify another adverb in *-mente*, i.e. '(s)he speaks English incredibly fluently' cannot be translated **habla inglés increíblemente fluidamente* but must be recast, e.g. *habla inglés con una soltura/facilidad/fluidez increíble.*

35.4.4 *Más*

For the use of *más* and *menos* in comparisons, see Chapter 6. *Más* can be used – at least in Spain and possibly elsewhere – as an intensifier in familiar speech without any comparative meaning.

Es que eres más tonto . . .	Wow, are you stupid!
Está más borracho . . .	Is he *drunk*!

35.4.5 *Lo* as an intensifier

For *lo* in sentences like *cuéntale lo bien que canta* 'tell her/him how well (s)he sings', *camina lo más lentamente/despacio que puedas* 'walk as slowly as you can', see 8.2.2.

35.4.6 *Qué, cuánto* and *cuán* as intensifiers

Exclamatory *qué* as in *¡qué bien!* is discussed at 28.4.4, *cuán* and *cuán*(*to*) as in *¡cuánto tiempo sin verte!* at 28.6.

35.4.7 Nouns used as intensifiers

Familiar speech uses some nouns as intensifiers, not to everyone's taste as the translations show: *parecía divertirse horrores* (APR, Sp.) 'he seemed to be incredibly amused', *para los setenta y cinco años que traía a cuestas . . . ¡estaba fenómeno!* (SG, Mex., dialogue) 'for her seventy-five years (lit. 'for the seventy-five years she was carrying on her back'), she looked phenomenal!', *nos aburrimos cantidad/nos reímos cantidad* 'we were bored stiff'/'did we laugh!', *me gustas mogollón, María, ya lo notas* (JM, Sp., dialogue) 'I *really* like you, María, you can see that' (*un mogollón de* 'a heap/load of . . .').

35.4.8 *Sí* and *si* as intensifiers

Sí, which means 'yes', and *si* (no accent), which usually means 'if', can both also be used as intensifiers.

Sí (with an accent) is often used to assert a fact that the speaker thinks has been contradicted or doubted, or for purposes of contrast: *—María no vendrá—. Sí que vendrá. Me lo prometió* '"María won't come." "She *will* come. She promised me"', *la ciudad tiene muchísimas ventajas, oiga. Aquí sí puede una tener privacidad* (ES. Mex., dialogue) 'the city does have a lot of advantages, you know. One *can* get some privacy here' (woman speaking), *entonces me entró cierta impaciencia por conocer un país que sí pudo llevar a cabo su cambio* (MB, Ur., dialogue) 'then I felt a certain impatience to get to know a country that really did complete its process of change' (i.e. Cuba).

Si (no accent) is often used as an intensifier in spoken language, usually preceded by *pero*. It emphasizes the following statement, often with an indignant or insistent tone, *¡(pero) si te oí la primera vez!* 'but I heard you the *first* time!', *pero si vivimos muy bien. No necesitamos nada* (SP, Sp., dialogue) 'but we really *do* live well. We don't need anything', *pero si mañana me voy al Perú y no vuelvo más* (ABE, Pe., dialogue; Sp. *a Perú*) 'but tomorrow I'm going to Peru and I'm not coming back', *—Párate como si nada te doliera—. Pero si todo me duele —dijo Isabel* (AM, Mex., dialogue. *Párate* = *ponte de pie* or *levántate* in Spain) '"But stand up as if nothing were hurting you". "But *everything's* hurting me," Isabel said'.

For *apenas si* 'scarcely' see 27.5.7 note 2.

35.4.9 *Bien* and *así de* as intensifiers

Both of these words are occasionally used colloquially before adjectives:

Es bien lista	She's pretty clever
Bien bueno que está, ¿eh?	Great, isn't it? (sarcastic)?
¿Adónde vas así de guapa? or *. . . vas tan guapa?*	Where are you off to looking so pretty?

(1) *Bien* with the meaning 'very' is more common in Latin America than in Spain: *es bien simpática* (Chilean informant) 'she's very pleasant', *¡si está bien viejo para ti!* (popular Mexican, from Arjona Iglesias, 1991, 78) 'he's really/pretty old for you!', *. . . todos dicen que estoy bien loco* (ET, Mex., dialogue) 'everyone says I'm pretty crazy!'

35.5 Adverbs of doubt

Words meaning 'perhaps', 'probably', 'possibly' usually – but not always – call for the subjunctive and are discussed at 20.2.

35.6 Adverbs of place

Only *acá*, *allá*, *adentro*, *afuera*, *abajo*, *arriba*, *atrás*, *delante* and *adelante* can be intensified or reduced: *más adentro/abajo/arriba/atrás* 'further inside/down/up/back', *más afuera* or *más hacia fuera* 'more to the outside', *más/menos hacia delante* 'further/less forwards'. *Más adelante* means 'later on', e.g. *ya hablaremos más adelante* 'we'll talk later on', *más allá de la realidad y el sueño* (LMD, Sp.) 'beyond reality and dreams', *un poco más acá del horizonte* (MB, Ur.) 'just on this side of the horizon', *¡un poquito más acá!* 'this way a bit!'/'towards me a bit!'

35.6.1 *Aquí, ahí, allí*

These adverbs are closely linked in meaning to the demonstratives:

este this near me/us	*aquí* here near me/us
ese that	*ahí* (just) there
aquel that further away	*allí* there further away/over there

In other words, *aquí* indicates somewhere near the speaker, *ahí* points to space near the speaker and/or the hearer, and *allí* to something distant.

Pero otras veces me siento aquí también un exiliado (MB, Ur., dialogue)	But sometimes I feel like an exile here too
Aquí construiremos la casa, ahí el garaje, y allí al final del jardín, la piscina	We'll build the house here, the garage there, and the swimming pool there at the bottom of the garden/yard
Deja la linterna ahí a tu lado	Leave the torch/US flashlight there by you
La seguí hasta el interior de una iglesia. Allí se encontró con un hombre y le entregó un sobre (JV, Mex., dialogue)	I followed her into a church. She met a man there and handed him an envelope

If the place referred to is out of sight, *ahí* is often used if it is nearby or in the same town, *allí* for remoter places:

—Lo he comprado en esa tienda—. Ah, sí, yo compro siempre ahí	'I bought it in that shop/store.' 'Oh yes, I always shop there'
Ya están ahí monsieur Fréjus y monsieur Bebé, y quieren cocktails (JC, Arg., dialogue. *Están ahí* = 'have arrived')	M. Fréjus and M. Bebé are here, and they want cocktails
Acuérdate que me corrieron, ya no trabajo ahí (MS, Mex., dialogue. Spain *me despidieron* or *me echaron*)	Remember that they fired me. I don't work work there any more
Mi hermana nació en Caracas, y yo también nací allí	My sister was born in Caracas, and I was born there too

(1) Important: one should distinguish carefully between *ahí* and *allí*: they tend to sound similar in some varieties of Spanish. One asks someone on the phone *¿qué tiempo hace ahí?* 'what's the weather like there?' because the weather of interest is close to the hearer. But use of *ahí* to refer to a place distant from the hearer and speaker may produce a strange effect. To ask persons from another country who are sitting next to you *¿qué tal se vive ahí?* 'what's it like living (just) there?', instead of *allí*, prompts them to look under their chairs . . .

(2) When there is more than one verb, it is important to place *allí* and *ahí* near the verb that they qualify:

Allí/Ahí me dijo que nos casaríamos	(S)he told me there that we would get married
Me dijo que nos casaríamos allí/ahí	She told me we would get married there

(3) 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', *es una hermosa ciudad, Princeton quiero decir . . . He estado ahí un par de veces* (JV, Mex., dialogue) 'It's a beautiful city, Princeton, I mean. I've been there a couple of times', *ahí está, dijo, y ahí estaba porque él lo conocía . . .* (GGM, Col., dialogue, pointing to a comet in the sky; or *allí*) '"There it is," he said, "and there it was because he was familiar with it."'

35.6.2 *Acá, allá*

In Latin America *acá* and *allá* are more common than *aquí* and *allí* in all styles, especially in the Southern Cone: *acá en la Argentina si querés una taza de té, tenés que beber mate* = in European Spanish *aquí en Argentina, si quieres una taza de té, tienes que beber mate* 'here in Argentina if you want a cup of tea you have to drink *mate*'; *oye, hijo: hay por acá oportunidades de chamba* (MS, Mex., dialogue. *La chamba* is an everyday expression from Peru northwards and especially in Mexico for *el trabajo* 'work') 'listen son: there are work opportunities round here', *vive seis meses allá y seis acá* (EM, Mex., dialogue) 'she lives six months there and six months here', *una bomba debió estallar cerca de acá* (LR, Col., dialogue) 'a bomb must have gone off close to here'.

In Spain, *acá* and *allá* are less common 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 lo/le encontramos	We were on the way there when we ran into him (i.e. 'met him')
Que se venga para acá en cuanto pueda	(S)he must come here as soon as (s)he can

(1) *Allá* is often used of large distances in Latin America and occasionally in Spain. It can also on both continents express vague yearnings. In time phrases, it emphasizes remoteness and may be obligatory: *allá/allí en* (*la*) *Argentina tenemos mucha familia* (*allí* in Spain, though *allá* is possible) 'we have a lot of family out there in Argentina', *el sur era y es acentuadamente indio; allá la cultura tradicional está todavía viva* (OP, Mex.) 'the south was and is markedly Amerindian; down there traditional culture is still alive'. In time phrases, *allá* cannot be replaced by *allí: había trabajado en sus dos primeros largometrajes, allá por 1950* (JM, Sp., dialogue, not **allí por*) 'he'd worked on his first full-length films sometime around 1950'.

(2) On both continents *allá* with a pronoun translates 'let him/her get on with it'/ 'it's your look-out/problem': *allá él si hace tonterías* 'if he's fooling around, that's his affair', *—Y eso es exactamente lo que niegan los protestantes—. Allá ellos* (GZ, Mex., dialogue) '"and that's precisely what the Protestants deny." "Good luck to them/Let them get on with it"'.

(3) *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'.

35.6.3 Use of adverbs of place as pronouns

One hears speakers use *aquí/ahí/allí* familiarly for *este/ese/aquel*: *aquí me dice* 'this one here says to me' (itself very familiar) so as to avoid a personal reference. The same phenomenon occurs in Latin America, and also with *acá/allá*.

35.6.4 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 duraznos de aquí son mejores que los de Estados Unidos (in Spain *durazno = el melocotón*)	The peaches (from) here are better than the ones from the United States
Mira el sombrero que lleva la señora de allí	Look at the hat that lady over there is wearing
Desde aquí se ve el mar	You can see the sea from here
Se sale por aquí	This is the way out

35.6.5 *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 in Spain although they are occasionally found in isolation with the meaning of *fuera*, *dentro*:

Por dentro era negro, y por fuera blanco	On the inside it was black, on the outside white
Dentro de la caja había otra	Inside the box was another
Ven (a)dentro y te lo explicaré	Come inside and I'll explain it to you
Vamos a cenar fuera	We're eating out (tonight)/We're having dinner outside
El gas tiende a escaparse hacia fuera	Gas tends to escape outwards
He estado fuera unos días	I've been away for a couple of days
un tren cuyos vagones quedaron volcados fuera de las vías (AM, Mex.).	a train whose wagons/carriages had ended up tipped over off the track
Tu ocurrencia ha estado fuera de lugar	Your witty remark was out of place
Afuera quedaba el domingo de verano, despoblado y soso (FU, Sp. Poetic: *fuera* is more usual)	Outside was the summer Sunday, empty (lit. 'depopulated') and lifeless

In Latin America *afuera* and *adentro* tend to be used much more often. *Adentro de* and *afuera de* are also used as prepositional phrases, this usage being considered normal in Argentina and colloquial in most other republics. Only *fuera de* and *dentro de* are used in Spain:

Afuera hacía calor porque empezaba enero (JC, Arg., Sp. *fuera*)	Outside it was hot because January was beginning
fuera en el parque, y adentro, por la casa entera seguían los disparos (JDC, Ch., Spain *fuera*, *dentro*)	Outside in the park, and inside, throughout the house, the shooting continued

Afuera de un banco nos encontramos a un hombre negro vestido con harapos (DES, Mex. Spain *fuera de*)	Outside a bank we came across a black man dressed in rags
nuestros treinta años adentro de Abc Color (*Abc Color*, Par. Sp. *dentro de*)	. . . our thirty years (working) at *Abc Color*

However, *dentro de* is used in Latin America, as in Spain, in time phrases of the sort *dentro de una semana* 'in a week's time' (very often ***en*** *una semana* on both continents).

(1) For the colloquial *adentro mío*, *adentro tuyo*, for *dentro de mí*, *dentro de ti*, see 9.7.

(2) *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/aparte de él*).

35.6.6 *Abajo, debajo de, abajo de, arriba, encima*

For the prepositions *bajo*, *debajo de* see 38.4. For *encima de* see 38.20 and 38.11.

Abajo means 'down' or 'downstairs', and *arriba* means 'up' or 'upstairs':

Te espero abajo/arriba	I'll wait downstairs/upstairs
Caminaba calle abajo/arriba	(S)he walked down/up the street

Abajo de is constantly used in Latin America where Spaniards would use *debajo de*:

¿Chofi guarda las quincenas abajo del colchón? (AM, Mex., Sp. *debajo de. Quincenas* = wages paid every two weeks)	Does Chofi keep her wages under the mattress?
La nevera está abajo del bar (CF, Mex., dialogue; Sp. *debajo de*)	The refrigerator is under the bar

The difference between *arriba* and *encima* is basically the same as between 'up' and 'on top':

Ponlo encima de la mesa	Put it on (top of) the table
Ponlo ahí encima	Put it there on top
Se le cayó encima un ladrillo	A brick fell on top of him
Ponlo ahí arriba	Put it up there
Unos pasos más adelante, miré por encima de mi hombro (BE, Mex.)	A few paces further on I looked over my shoulder
El avión pasó por encima del pueblo	The plane flew over the village

(1) *Encima* can also be used figuratively: *les dije que se lo daría y encima se quejan* 'I told them I would give it to them and on top of that/even then they complain', *ya tenía bastante con su propio sentimiento de culpa . . . como para soportar, encima, la inquisición de una hermana mojigata* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'she already had enough to put up with her own feeling of guilt . . . without having to tolerate interrogation on top of that from a holier-than-thou sister', *la noche se nos vino encima* lit. 'night came down upon us', i.e. 'night fell around us'.

(2) *Arriba de* for *encima de* in the meaning of 'above'/'ahead of' in order or rank is accepted by the Academy: *NGLE* 30.5e: *iba en* (Sp. *a*) *la misma escuela, tres años arriba de mí* (ES, Mex. dialogue) 'he was at the same school, three years ahead of me'.

35.6.7 *Detrás, detrás de* and *atrás*

Atrás 'backwards/back' refers to motion backwards or things located to the rear or left behind, whereas *detrás* and the prepositional phrase *detrás de* indicate static position behind something:

dar un paso atrás	to move a step backwards
Ella subió las escaleras sin siquiera mirar hacia atrás (GCI, Cu.)	She went up the stairs without even looking back
Ponte detrás de mí	Stand behind me
detrás del árbol/detrás de la mesa	behind the tree/behind the table
. . . dirigiéndose hacia la pequeña plaza que habían dejado dos calles atrás (AM, Mex.)	. . . heading for the little square that they had left behind two streets back
¡No te quedes atrás!	Don't lag behind!

(1) In Latin America *atrás de* is frequently used for *detrás de*: *las demás me veían desde atrás de la mesa* (AM, Mex., Sp. *desde detrás de la mesa*) 'the other women were looking at me from behind the table'. For *detrás mío* (instead of *detrás de mí*) see Section 9.7.

(2) *Atrás* is also used in the time phrases *años/meses/días atrás* 'some years/months/days ago'. See 36.4 note 1.

(3) For *tras* = *detrás de* see 38.21.

35.6.8 *Delante, delante de* and *adelante*

In Spain *delante* 'in front' and the prepositional phrase *delante de* 'in front of' denote place, *adelante* 'forward(s)/onward(s)' denotes motion forward:

Yo iba delante	I was walking ahead/in front
Delante de ti no hablará	(S)he won't say anything in front of you
¡Lo hemos tenido delante de nosotros todo el tiempo! (JV, Mex., dialogue)	We've had it in front of us all the time!
Sigue adelante que yo te alcanzaré	Go on ahead. I'll catch you up
¡Adelante!	Come in!

(1) In colloquial Latin-American Spanish *adelante de* is often used for 'in front of', but this is not heard in Spain: *vio a Federico que, unos cuantos pasos adelante de él, se detenía y agachaba a tomar una piedra* (SG, Mexico; Sp. *delante de él*) 'he saw Federico, who was stopping and bending down to pick up a stone a few paces in front of him'.

(2) Omission of *de* in the prepositional phrase, common in Latin America, occasionally heard in Spain, is considered incorrect in careful language: *dentro de mi corazón*, *fuera de la casa*, not **dentro mi corazón*, etc.

(3) For *ante* = *delante de* see 38.3.

(4) *De . . . en adelante* is used in quantities and in time phrases: *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'm not doing it again'.

(5) For *delante mío* instead of *delante de mí* see 9.7.

35.7 Adverbs of time

35.7.1 *Ya, ya no*

Ya has a wide variety of uses. In many common constructions its meaning is determined by the tense of the verb that it modifies:

Vienen ya They're coming right now
Ya llegarán They'll be here/Don't worry, they'll come
Ya han llegado They've already arrived
Ya llegaron (Lat. Am.) They already arrived
Ya no vienen They're not coming any more
Ya no llegarán They won't be coming any more

Further examples:

Ya no soy el de antes I'm not the man I was
¿Quién se acuerda ya del Charleston? Who remembers the Charleston anymore?
Ya no tengo edad para trabajar (JMa, Sp., dialogue) I'm no longer of an age to be working/I'm too old to work
Desde que llegó dio a entender que se sentía fatigado; las cosas ya no marchaban como antes (CF, Mex.) From the moment he arrived he let it be known that he felt tired; things weren't working anymore as they used to

But *ya* has many expressive uses which do not always appear in the dictionaries. Depending on context and intonation it can express impatience, frustration, fulfilled expectations, resignation, certainty about the future, disbelief or, in negative sentences, denial of something expected:

Iros, iros a la playa, que ya me quedo yo aquí a lavar la ropa (CRG, Sp., dialogue. *Iros* is familiar for *idos*; see 21.2.4 note 2) Go on, off you go to the beach while I stay here washing the clothes (martyred tone)
Lleva seis meses en cama. Si eso no es grave, pues ya me dirás (S)he's been in bed six months. If that's not serious, then you tell me what is
Sirve ya la cena (impatient tone) Serve supper *now*
Ya siéntate y deja de interrumpir (AM, Mex., dialogue; Spain *siéntate ya*) Sit down and stop interrupting
Por mí, que se vaya ya (S)he can go right now, as far as I'm concerned
Ya le pasaré la cuenta cuando gane el gallo (GGM, Col., dialogue) I'll send you the bill when your cockerel/rooster wins
Ya cuando uno los trata se da cuenta de que son magníficas personas (ES, Mex., dialogue) As soon as you have anything to do with them you straightaway realize they're great people
¡Basta ya! ¡Calla ya!/¡Ya está bien! That's enough! Not another word!
Bueno, eso es el colmo ya Well, that *is* the limit!
Ya puedes tener buen olfato con la nariz que tú tienes You can well have a good sense of smell with the nose you've got!
Ya quisiera la Diana Ross para sus días festivos ser tan linda como tú (RS, PR, dialogue; Sp. *para sus días de fiesta*). Diana Ross on a good day (lit. 'on her holidays') would like to be as pretty as you
Por mí, ya puede llover, que tenemos tienda de campaña As far as I'm concerned, it can go ahead and rain – we've got a tent

Hitler habría sido todavía peor – y ya es decir . . .	Hitler would have been even worse – and that's saying something . . .
cuando ya acabemos de limpiar la casa . . .	when we finally finish cleaning the house . . .
No, no, ya te digo que él no sabía nada de todo aquello	No, no, I'm *telling* you he knew nothing about all that
¡Ya tuviste que contarme el final!	You *would* have to tell me the ending!
Ya lo sé	I already know/I *know*
Ya empezamos . . .	(Oh dear) here we go again . . .
Ya era hora . . .	It's about time . . .
Ya podías haberme dejado unos dólares	You could have lent me a couple of dollars (wounded tone)
—¿No ves lo inteligente que soy? —Ya, ya . . .	'Don't you see how intelligent I am?' 'Yeah, sure . . .' (sarcastic tone)
—El jefe quiere hablar conmigo. Está muy enfadado—. Ya será menos	'The boss wants to talk to me. He's very angry.' 'Come on, it won't be that bad.'
Ya ves	There you are/Didn't I say so?
Ya hablaremos (does not necessarily imply a firm commitment)	We'll talk again sometime . . .

(1) *Ya . . . ya* is a literary alternative for *o . . . o* 'either . . . or': *ya porque la idea del matrimonio acabara/acabó por asustarle, ya porque no pudiera/podía olvidar a María, no apareció en la iglesia* 'either because the idea of marriage eventually frightened him or because he couldn't forget María, he didn't appear at the church'. The indicative is more colloquial. *Bien . . . bien . . .* with the indicative can also be used.

(2) *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/OK"'.

(3) *Desde ya* 'straightaway' is an expression from the Southern Cone which seems to have spread to Spain, where *desde ahora ya* or *enseguida* are more usual.

35.7.2 *Recién*

In Spain *recién* appears before participles, a construction also found in Latin America: *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', *una amiga de mis padres, recién llegada de la Unión Soviética* (DES, Mex.) 'a female friend of my parents who had recently arrived from the Soviet Union'.

The use of *recién* as a free-standing adverb of time is one hallmark of Latin-American Spanish, particularly in the Southern Cone. It has two basic meanings, neither of which is used in Spain:

(**a**) 'Right now', 'just now', 'recently':

Recién lo vi (Spain *le acabo de ver*)	I've just seen him
—¿Cuándo lo dijo? —Recién (Sp. *Ahora mismo*)	'When did (s)he say it?' 'Just now'
El nuevo Estadio de Delfines, que recién concluyó una serie de remodelaciones mayores (*La Jornada*, Mex. Spain *recientemente/hace poco . . .*)	The new Delfines Stadium, which recently saw the end of a series of major refurbishments

(**b**) 'Only', as in 'only now', 'only next week/this year/then' etc., or, with the future, 'not until'. This usage is particularly common in the Southern Cone even in written language, but it is considered colloquial further north:

recién en los últimos siete años (Sp. *sólo en* or *solamente en . . .*)	only in the last seven years . . .
Recién lo sabremos a último momento (*La Nación*, Arg. Sp. *no lo sabremos hasta el . . .*)	We won't find out until the last minute
Y él recién entonces se da cuenta de que está herida (MP, Arg., dialogue; Sp. *. . . sólo entonces se da cuenta . . .*)	And only then he realizes that she's injured
Pero las malas noticias recién empezaban (MSQ, Arg. Sp. *solo acababan de empezar*)	But the bad news was only just beginning

35.7.3 *Todavía, aún*

Todavía and *aún* both mean 'still'/'yet' and are synonymous. With words like *menos*, *más*, *menor* and *mayor* they are translated as 'even'. *Aún* with an accent must be distinguished from *aun* 'even', although its meaning sometimes overlaps with *aun.* The latter is discussed at 35.8:

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 (CF, Mex., dialogue; or *todavía menos/menos bonita todavía*)	I can assure you, your face can look even less pretty
Es todavía/aún/aun/incluso/hasta más difícil de lo que yo pensaba	It's even more difficult than I thought

35.7.4 *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', although there is sometimes some overlap in meaning. *Luego* in this sense is stressed: ***luego*** *viene/viene* ***luego*** '(s)he's coming later'. If the *luego* is not stressed here, it means 'so'/'in that case'. *Entonces* may also mean 'at that time':

Abrí la puerta, y entonces me di cuenta de lo que había pasado (*luego* here would mean *después* 'afterwards')	I opened the door, and realized then what had happened
Entonces tuvo una crisis de arrepentimiento y se levantó decidida a romper la ventana (ES, Mex., dialogue)	Then she had a fit (lit. 'crisis') of remorse and stood up determined to break the window
Desde entonces soy feliz	From that time on I have been happy
Recuerdo que los cines de entonces siempre olían a agua de colonia	I remember that cinemas at that time always smelt of eau de Cologne
el entonces catedrático de griego	the then professor of Greek
Hasta luego (cf. *hasta ahora*, 'see you in a minute')	See you later/goodbye
Según dice mamá, que luego estuvo seis años liada con Tey (JMs, Sp.)	According to mother, who later on was involved with Tey for six years
El detective lo escuchó, luego pidió una cerveza y un tequila (EM, Mex.)	The detective listened to him and then asked for a beer and a tequila

(**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/Luego hace más calor en Madrid que en Sevilla*	'In Madrid it's 40 degrees, in Seville 38'. 'In that case it's hotter in Madrid than in Seville'
Es mi secreto. Entonces ya me lo contarás. Los secretos siempre se cuentan (ABV, Sp., dialogue; *luego* not possible in in conjunction with *ya*)	'It's my secret'. 'Then you'll soon tell me. Secrets always get told'
Pienso luego existo (set phrase)	I think, therefore I am

(1) The following words also convey the idea of 'then': *después*, 'after', *acto seguido* 'next'/'immediately after', *a continuación* 'next'/'immediately after', *en seguida/enseguida* 'immediately'/'straightaway'.

35.7.5 *Antes* 'before'

Antes must be distinguished from the entirely separate word *ante* 'in the presence of'/'in front of', discussed at 38.3:

Antes prefería hablar contigo	First I'd prefer to talk to you
Es que antes las parejas sí se tomaban en serio lo de hasta que la muerte los separe (ES, Mex., dialogue)	The thing is that in the past couples really used to take the bit about 'till death do us part' seriously
Lo antes que te puedo llamar es a las cinco	The earliest I can call you is at five
Lola se levantó antes que nadie	Lola got up before everyone else
Si la ves antes que yo . . .	If you see her before I do . . .

(1) For the subordinators *antes* (*de*) *que* and *después* (*de*) *que* see 20.4.7 and 18.3.3.

(2) For *antes que* meaning 'rather than' see 37.4.2. note 3.

35.7.6 *Otrora*

This word, now archaic in Spain, is still alive in the Latin-American media, usually with an ironic tone: *la otrora pujante economía de Irlanda pone a temblar a la UE* (*El Tiempo*, Col.) 'the once thriving economy of Ireland is now making the European Union quake', *el otrora poderoso Partido Revolucionario Dominicano* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'the once powerful Dominican Revolutionary Party'. In Spain the words *antes* or *previamente* are used.

35.8 *Incluso (inclusive), hasta, aun, siquiera*

All these words may translate the English 'even' in such sentences as 'she even speaks Russian and Greek', 'even in Britain the sun shines sometimes'. *Incluso* and *aun* (no accent) are synonyms, but nowadays *incluso* is more often used (see note 1 for *inclusive*):

Incluso/Aun hoy día algunas personas siguen creyendo en las hadas	Even today some people still believe in fairies
Incluso/Aun si le das dinero, no lo hará . . . e incluso en los años ochenta (JA, Mex.)	Even if you give him money he won't do it . . . and even in the 1980s
Yo soy débil y extranjera y aun en mi condición de aristocracia, empobrecida (CF, Mex. Dialogue)	I'm feeble and foreign, and despite my aristocratic status (lit. 'even in my aristocratic status'), impoverished

Important: before or after comparative adjectives and adverbs (including *más* and *menos*), 'even' is translated by *todavía*, *aún* or *incluso*, but not by *aun*: *todavía/incluso/aún más inteligente* 'even more intelligent', *menos probable aún/todavía* 'even less probable'.

Hasta, literally 'until', may also mean 'even':

Ha llovido tanto que hasta/incluso/aun los patos están hartos	It's rained so much that even the ducks have had enough
Y un día hasta me dijeron que usara el teléfono cuando quisiera (ABE, Pe., dialogue)	And one day they even told me to use the phone whenever I liked

For other meanings of *hasta* see 38.14.

Siquiera means 'at least':

Dame siquiera cien euros	Give me a hundred euros at least
Yo creo que si se mete uno a eso de las caridades, tiene que ser a lo grande, siquiera quedar como San Francisco (AM, Mex., dialogue)	I think that if one's going to go into charity work, one's got to do it in a big way, at least be like St Francis
Siquiera el General es generoso. Mira el coche que me regaló (ibid.)	At least the General is generous. Look at the car he gave me

Ni siquiera translates 'not even':

Bueno, los ingleses . . . los autos por la izquierda . . . ni siquiera han aceptado el sistema métrico (C. Catania, Arg., interview; Sp. *los autos = los coches*)	Well, the English . . . cars on the left-hand side of the road . . . they haven't even accepted the metric system

(1) ***Inclusive*** is much used in Latin America where European Spanish uses *incluso*, although the latter is also common on both continents: *la acción demasiado social . . . de muchos sacerdotes y religiosas, inclusive de obispos* (MSQ, Arg.) 'the excessively social [i.e. left-wing] activity of many priests and nuns, even of bishops', *el gran ventarrón . . . que inclusive en una casa arrancó el portón* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'the violent wind that even ripped the front door off a house'.

In Spain *inclusive* is used thus: *te mando las revistas, el último número inclusive/incluido* (*inclusive* follows the noun) 'I'm sending you the magazines, including the latest number', *hasta el domingo inclusive/incluido* 'up to and including Sunday'. *Inclusivamente* is hardly ever used.

36 Expressions of time

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- Tenses in sentences like 'I've been here three days', 'it's the first time that . . .' (Section 36.2)
- Ways of saying 'for six months', 'I've waited (for) two hours', etc. (Section 36.3)
- Uses of the following words to express duration of time:

llevar (36.3.1)	*durante* (36.3.4)	*para* (36.3.6)
hace . . . que (36.3.2)	*por* (36.3.5)	*desde* (36.3.7)

- Translating 'ago' (Section 36.4)
- Translating 'in three days', etc. (Section 36.5)
- Translating 'again' (Section 36.6)
- *Tardar* (Section 36.7)
- Translating 'still' (Section 36.8)
- Translating dates (Section 36.9)
- Telling the time and miscellaneous time expressions (Section 36.10)
- Translating 'next' (Section 36.11)
- Expressions of age (Section 36.12)
- Omission of prepositions in certain expressions of time (Section 36.13)

36.1 General

This chapter is divided into two parts. Section 36.2–8 covers such matters as the expression of duration, e.g. 'for *n* days', 'since . . .', 'during . . .', 'still'. Sections 36.9–36.10 contain translations of a number of expressions connected with the clock, dates and similar matters.

36.2 General remarks on tenses used in expressions of duration and other expressions of time

English-speakers tend to use the wrong tense in Spanish in sentences like 'I have been learning Spanish for three years', 'it's the first time I've seen her for months'. Unlike English, European Spanish often uses – and Latin-American Spanish normally uses – the present tense to indicate events that are still in progress or are likely to recur: *estudio español desde hace tres años* 'I've been learning Spanish for three years' (not *he estudiado . . .*), ***desde que te conozco es*** *la primera vez que* ***te oigo*** *decir algo que no debías* (GGM, Col., dialogue) 'it's the first time **since I've known you** that **I've heard** you say something that you shouldn't have said'.

If the event *was* continuing in the past, European Spanish often uses – and Latin-American Spanish normally uses – the imperfect tense for events that were still in progress whereas English uses the pluperfect: *estudiaba español desde hacía tres años* 'I/(s)he had been studying Spanish for three years', ***desde que disfrutaba*** *la compañía de Iris* ***encontraba*** *terribles sus horas de soledad* (ES, Mex.) 'since he had been enjoying Iris's company he found the hours that he was alone terrible'.

36.3 Duration

There are various ways of expressing duration, not all of them interchangeable, e.g. *llevar . . ., hace . . ., desde hace . . ., desde, durante, en, por, para*.

36.3.1 *Llevar*

This verb provides the best translation of sentences like 'I've been doing something for *n* hours/days/months/years', but it indicates that 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: one would then say *he estado/estuve seis meses en España*.

If the event is still in progress, a present tense of *llevar* is used:

Llevamos cinco años viviendo juntos (CRG, Sp.)	We've been living together for five years
El ascensor lleva estropeado dos meses (ibid.)	The lift/elevator has been broken for two months
¿Cuánto (tiempo) llevas en este trabajo?	How long have you been in this job?
Llevo diez años sentada aquí esperando que me lo preguntes (GGM, Col. dialogue)	I've been sitting here for ten years waiting for you to ask me that
Llevas media hora hablando de lo mismo (EP, Mex., dialogue)	You've been talking about the same thing for half an hour

If the event or state *was* still in progress at the time, an imperfect tense of *llevar* is used (other past tenses are not used in this construction):

Llevabas años diciéndolo	You had been saying it for years
El chalet llevaba más de diez años cerrado (RM, Sp.)	The house had been closed up for more than ten years
Se comportaba como si llevara veinticinco años trabajando en la compañía (ES, Mex., dialogue)	He behaved as if he'd been working in the company for twenty-five years

(1) This construction with *llevar* is very common in speech but less common in formal writing than the construction using *hace . . . /hacía . . .* described in the next section.

(2) *Llevar* often appears before gerunds but the latter cannot be negative: **llevo años no fumando* is not a possible translation of 'I haven't been smoking for years': *hace años que no fumo/llevo años sin fumar/no fumo desde hace años*.

(3) In Latin America *tener* is also used: *tengo dos años aquí*, 'I've been here for two years', *tenía pocos meses de gobernar cuando logró el cambio* (AM, Mex., dialogue) 'he'd only been Governor for a few months when he managed to bring about the change'; Kany, 273–4, quotes examples from all parts of the continent. This is also found in formal styles: *aunque tengan muchos años de vivir allí . . . nadie los confundiría con los norteamericanos auténticos* (OP, Mex.) 'although they've been living there for many years, no one would take them for true North Americans'.

(4) The following third-person impersonal construction with *llevar* is noteworthy: *no debía de llevarnos mucho más de media hora plantarnos allí* (LS, Sp.) 'it shouldn't take us more than half an hour to get there', *me llevó años aprender eso* 'it took me years to learn that'. See 36.7 note 1.

(5) For *me lleva tres años* '(s)he's three years older than me' see 6.1 note 6.

36.3.2 *Hace/hacía/hará . . . que . . .*

***Hace* + the present tense**. *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 I'm still there). *Hace* in this construction is followed by a simple present tense when the following verb indicates something still in progress.

If the sentence is negative, the perfect tense is also often found in Spain: *¿cuántos años hace que no le has visto?* (JMs, Sp., dialogue) 'how long has it been since you last saw him?' This use of the perfect tense instead of the present is rejected by many Latin Americans and by some Spaniards and should probably be avoided by learners of Latin-American Spanish, although there is much regional variation in this matter. This sentence demonstrates the use of the present in negative sentences: *yo no puedo ver a mi marido desde hace quince días . . .* (EP, Mex., dialogue) 'I haven't been able to see my husband for a fortnight'.

Hacía + 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'. If the sentence is negative, European Spanish sometimes uses the pluperfect in negative sentences in the same way as English: *hacía siete años que Juan de Dios no había visto a su hijo mayor* (MVM, Sp.) 'Juan de Dios hadn't seen his eldest son for seven years'. But the imperfect is far more usual everywhere *. . . que no veía a su hijo mayor*.

Hará . . . que + the present tense and ***haría . . . que*** + the imperfect are commonly used in suppositions or approximations: *hará dos años que no la veo* (Sp. also *. . . no la he visto*) 'it must be two years since I've seen her'. Further examples (affirmative sentences):

Hace años que vienen pagando una especie de ahorro previo para asegurarse la plata (CP, Arg., dialogue; *plata = dinero* in Spain)	For years they've been paying into a sort of savings fund to make sure of their money
Me dijo que la señorita Brines hacía más de un mes que venía merodeando por el edificio (ABE, Pe., dialogue)	She told me that Ms Brines had been lurking around the building for more than a month
Hará siglos que no se lava (JM, Sp., dialogue: suppositional future)	He can't have washed in centuries
El disco era viejísimo. Hacía diez años que no lo escuchaba (ES, Mex.)	The record was ancient. She hadn't listened to it for ten years

Negative sentences:

Hace años que no la veo y también años que no me han hablado de ella (MVM, Sp., dialogue) (both tenses used)	I haven't seen her for years and for years also they haven't spoken to me about her
. . . como no bebo hace tiempo . . . (MVLl Pe., dialogue. Sp. *desde hace tiempo*)	. . . since I haven't been drinking for some time
Hacía años que no veía a David (JA, Sp., dialogue)	I hadn't seen David for years
¿Cuánto hacía que no desayunaba huevos con chorizo? (EM, Mex. Redundant *no*. See 27.2.4)	How long had it been since he'd had eggs with chorizo for breakfast?

(1) Important: one cannot use the present tense if *hacer que* or *llevar* are not used. One can say *he estado tres horas aquí* 'I've been here three hours', but not **estoy tres horas aquí. Llevo tres horas aquí/ hace tres horas que estoy aquí/estoy aquí desde hace tres horas* are the correct forms.

(2) Important: the verb *hacer* does not appear in the plural in this impersonal 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 . . .*

(3) 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*. The former is appropriate while one is actually drinking coffee with the friend; the latter suggests that it would be a good idea to meet some time in the future.

(4) *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 36.5.

36.3.3 Translating 'for' when the event is no longer in progress

Verb in a past tense and no preposition or *durante* in formal styles:

Estuvimos (*durante*) *cuatro días y al quinto nos trasladaron a la Cárcel de Mujeres* (EP, Mex., dialogue)	We were there for four days and on the fifth day they transferred us to the Women's Prison
Trabajé (*durante*) *varios años en Madrid*	I worked in Madrid for several years
¿cuánto tiempo ha estado usted/estuvo en Madrid? (addressed to someone who has left Madrid)	How long were you in Madrid?

(1) Sentences like 'I haven't seen him for years', 'she hasn't smoked for years' can be thought of as 'non-events' that are still in progress. For this reason, they are discussed at 36.3.2. *Hace . . . que* with a preterite tense means 'ago' and is discussed at 36.4.

36.3.4 *Durante*

The basic meaning of *durante* is 'during': *durante el siglo XX* '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* 'for/in years', *durante muchos siglos* 'for/in many centuries'. When an event lasted throughout the period mentioned, the verb is in the preterite tense: ***fue*** *presidenta durante tres años* 'she was president for three years'; see 17.4.2.

(1) Spanish uses the preterite continuous (*estuve hablando*, *estuvo leyendo*, etc.) to emphasize that an event continued throughout a period of time: *durante un cuarto de hora estuvo mirándote* (LS, Mex., dialogue) 'he was staring at you for a quarter of an hour'. See 19.2.3.

(2) *En* may be used for *durante* in Latin America: *Olga no habló en varios minutos* (LS, Mex.) 'Olga didn't speak for several minutes'.

(3) Use of *en* may, on both continents, also correspond to English 'in' in negative sentences like 'I haven't smoked in/for years'; see 36.5 note 2.

(4) *En* may also be an alternative for *dentro de* in sentences like *te veo dentro de/en cinco minutos* 'I'll see you in five minutes'. See 36.5 for discussion.

36.3.5 *Por* meaning 'for' in time phrases

Por means 'for' when referring to periods of time, usually past time, when the speaker emphasizes the shortness of the period. The preposition may in some cases be omitted altogether:

Entraré solo/sólo (*por*) *un momento*	I'll come in just for a moment
Me ha prestado el coche solo/sólo (*por*) *tres días*	(S)he's lent me the car for three days only
Por un momento, Bernardo estuvo a punto de ocultar los motivos de la visita (JMM, Sp.)	For a moment Bernardo was about to conceal the reasons for his visit
Por un instante, Félix sintió que una pantalla plateada los separaba a él y a Mary (CF, Mex.)	For a moment Félix felt that a silver screen was separating him and Mary

(1) *Por* and *para* are often interchangeable in time expressions fixing the duration of some short-lived future need (see also 36.3.6 for *para* in time phrases): *solo/sólo queremos la habitación por/para unos días* 'we only want the room for a few days'.

(2) When longer periods are involved, Latin Americans may use *por* where European speakers use *durante* or *para*: *por cuatro o cinco años nos tuvieron acorralados* (MVLl, Pe., dialogue; Sp. *durante . . .*) 'they had us cornered for four or five years', *mi viejo sombrero, que ha soportado soles y lluvias por más de tres años* (J JA, Mex., dialogue; Sp. *durante*) 'my old hat, that has put up with sun and rain for more than three years', *ahí permaneció por casi dos semanas* (LS, Ch., Sp. *durante . . .* or no preposition) 'there he stayed for nearly two weeks'.

36.3.6 *Para* in expressions of duration

Para is used to translate the idea of 'for' a specified period of time in the future, especially when the idea of 'enough for' is involved:

Tenemos agua para tres días	We've enough water for three days
Las últimas lluvias alivian al campo alicantino solo para dos meses (*Abc*, Sp.)	The recent rains will bring only two months' relief to the fields of Alicante
Han sido recuperados productos para dos meses de abastecimiento (*Panorama*, Ven.)	Produce has been recovered [from smugglers] sufficient for two months' supplies

(1) *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'.

(2) *Para* can also mean 'by' in time phrases: *para entonces todos estaremos viejos* 'we'll all be old by then'.

36.3.7 *Desde*

Desde translates 'since' or, sometimes, 'for'. *Desde que* is used before verb phrases, *desde* before singular noun phrases and adverbials, and *desde hace/hacía* before plural or numbered nouns. *Desde* can be used in a way unfamiliar to English-speakers: *desde niña hablo francés* 'I've spoken French since I was a little girl'.

Correct choice of the tense is important. Events that are still in progress usually require the present tense, especially in Latin America. But in Spain, the perfect may optionally be used:

desde ayer/desde hace un año	since yesterday/since a year ago
Mi marido está parado desde hace dos años (ABV, Sp., dialogue)	My husband's been out of work for two years
Te he estado esperando desde antes de la una (or *te estoy esperando*)	I've been waiting for you since before one o'clock

Desde hace unos meses atrás alguien me había susurrado la verdad (WU, Mex., dialogue)	Some months ago/before someone had whispered the truth to me
Desde entonces nada le ha durado mucho (JM, Sp., or *. . . nada le dura*)	Since then nothing has lasted long for him
Lo sé desde que te vi en el hospital (GGM, Col., dialogue; or Sp. *lo he sabido*)	I've known it since I saw you in the hospital
. . . lo que está pasando desde julio del pasado año (*Granma*, Cu., or Sp. *ha estado pasando*)	. . . what has been happening since July last year

Events that *were* in progress are expressed by the imperfect tense: *desde la gran crisis dormían en habitaciones separadas* (SPl, Mex., Sp. also *habían dormido*) 'since the great crisis they had been sleeping in separate rooms'.

Events that are or were no longer in progress require a past tense, normally a compound tense (perfect, pluperfect) in Spain or the preterite in much of Latin America:

He fumado tres veces desde octubre	I've smoked three times since October
Yo había fumado tres veces desde entonces	I had smoked three times since then
Claro que he vuelto a hacerlo/volví a hacerlo desde entonces (preterite preferred in Latin America)	Obviously I've done it again since then
Te estuve esperando desde antes de la una	I was waiting for you from before one o'clock

Desde hace/desde hacía are required before plural nouns, before specified periods of time and before numbers. The compound tenses are possible in European Spanish:

Todos los adolescentes se han comportado exactamente igual desde hace tres mil años (C. Rico-Godoy, Sp., *se comportan* possible in Spain, normal in Latin America)	All adolescents have acted exactly the same way for three thousand years
Desde hacía tiempo sospechaba que Tita deseaba que ella desapareciera de este mundo (LE, Mex.)	She had been suspecting for some time that Tita wanted her to disappear from this world
Estoy aquí desde hace cinco años (APR, Sp., dialogue)	I've been here for five years

(1) Colloquial speech sometimes omits the *desde* from this phrase. This is considered careless by many speakers, but it may be more acceptable in Latin America, cf. *hace treinta años estoy sentado frente a una máquina de escribir* (*Abc Color*, Par.) 'for thirty years I've been sitting in front of a typewriter' (for *desde hace treinta años*), *somos República hace ocho años* (MVLl, Pe., dialogue) 'we've been a Republic for eight years' (*desde hace ocho años*), *no los veo hace mil años* (ABE, Pe., dialogue, Sp. *desde hace mil años*) 'I haven't seen them in a thousand years'.

(2) When the preterite is expected, literary styles, especially in Spain, often use a *-ra* or *-se* form of the verb after *desde*: *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'. See 18.3.3 for discussion.

(3) 'Since' may sometimes need to be translated by *hace que . . . /hacía . . . 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'.

(4) *Desde* is sometimes used in colloquial Latin-American speech to emphasize the moment at which something was done: *desde el martes llegó mi hermano* 'my brother already arrived – on Tuesday'.

(5) **Important**: *desde* never means 'because'. English-speakers make this mistake because 'since' has two meanings: 'I haven't seen him since Christmas' (i.e. from the time of . . .) *no lo/le he visto desde navidad*, but 'I'll do it since you're being nice' = *lo haré porque/ya que estás siendo simpático/a*, never . . . *desde que* . . .

36.4 Translating 'ago'

The usual formula is *hace/hacía* with a preterite or pluperfect tense, or, in Spain, with a perfect tense if the event is recent (see 18.2.3):

Lo/Le vi hace años	I saw him years ago
Lo/Le habíamos visto hacía años	We'd seen him years ago/before then
Pero hace un mes quisiste robármelos (MC, Mex., dialogue)	But you tried to steal them [my notes] from me a month ago
La vi hace cosa de dos meses	I saw her a couple of months ago
La he visto (Lat. Am. *la vi*) *hace un momento* (Sp. perfect of recency)	I saw her a moment ago

(1) **Important**: *atrás* is often used to mean 'ago': *lo repararon tiempo atrás* 'they mended it/fixed it some time ago', *su última visita al museo, veinte años atrás* (APR, Sp.) 'his last visit to the museum, twenty years ago/previously', *ahí nació la gran civilización egipcia miles de años atrás* (DES, Mex., dialogue) 'the great Egyptian civilization was born there thousands of years ago'.

(2) Use of the verb *haber* for *hacer* in this construction (with the present-tense form *ha*) is now archaic in Spain, but survives in some colloquial varieties in Latin America: *ha mucho que él perdió a su madre* (MP, Arg., dialogue = *hace mucho*) 'he lost his mother a long time ago'.

36.5 'In n days/weeks', etc.

Foreign students often misuse *dentro de* when translating the English 'in' in time expressions. *Dentro de* can only refer to the future or the future in the past. One cannot say **lo hice dentro de un mes* 'I did it in one month', correctly *lo hice en un mes*:

—¿Cuándo empieza? —Dentro de tres días	'When does it start?' 'In three days' time'
Dentro de algunos años entrará en los libros de texto (DT, Mex., dialogue)	In a few years' time it'll appear in the textbooks
de hoy en ocho días	in eight days' time
Me faltan/quedan tres días para irme	I'm going in three days' time.

(1) Use of *en* to mean *dentro de* is common in Latin America and is increasingly heard in Spain: *no te preocupes, vuelvo en un rato* (AM, Mex., dialogue) 'don't worry, I'll be back in a minute', *en cinco minutos estoy ahí* (LS, Sp., dialogue) 'I'll be there in five minutes'. Seco (1998, 186), complains that this is ambiguous since it can also mean 'in the space of': *lo haré en una hora* is more likely to mean 'it'll take me an hour do it'.

(2) *En* can mean the same as the English 'in' in negative sentences like 'I've not been there in/for years': *sabe usted que no nos hemos visto en doce años* (CF, Mex., dialogue) 'you know that we haven't seen one another in/for twelve years'.

36.6 'Again'

There are numerous ways of translating 'again':

(**a**) *Volver a . . .* plus an infinitive. This is probably the most usual construction before a verb:

Han vuelto a hacerlo	They've done it again
Cuando cerró la puerta volví a llorar (AM, Mex., dialogue)	When he shut the door, I started crying again
Como me vuelvas a hablar de esa manera . . . (this use of *como* is discussed at 29.8.2)	If you talk to me like that again . . .

(**b**) *Otra vez*:

No te lo digo otra vez/No te lo vuelvo a decir/No vuelvo a decírtelo	I won't tell you again
Otra vez más vuelve a subir la bencina (*Primera Línea*, Ch., Sp. *la gasolina*)	Petrol/US Gas price up again
Se habían revocado los acuerdos y Ahumada era otra vez presidente del Congreso (JA, Mex.)	The agreements had been revoked and Ahumada was president of Congress again

(**c**) *De nuevo* is more literary than *otra vez*:

De nuevo volvieron las suspicacias y los recelos	Once again suspicion and distrust returned
Esperemos que EE.UU. después no quiera meterse de nuevo en todo (*La Razón*, Bol.)	Let us hope that the USA won't want to interfere in everything again

36.7 *Tardar*

Tardar, as well as meaning 'to be late' (*no tardes* 'don't be late'), may translate 'to take' in expressions of time:

Tardó un año en escribirnos	(S)he took a year to write to us/(S)he didn't write to us for a year
Poco tardaron en vengarse (*Crónica*, Arg.)	They soon got their own back
Se tarda media hora andando	It takes half an hour to walk it
Cuánto tardaste, Mamá (JP, Mex., dialogue)	You were such a long time Mother!

(1) *Llevar* may also be used in third-person 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'. Note the difference between this third-person construction, i.e. *les llevó tres años construir el puente* and *tardaron tres años* ***en*** *construir el puente* 'they took three years to build the bridge'. English-speakers tend to forget the *en* in the second of these sentences.

This impersonal use of *llevar* must not be confused with *llevar* in phrases like *lleva años cerrado* 't's been closed for year', *llevo horas aquí* 'I've been here for hours'. See 36.3.1.

(2) *Tardarse* is heard in Mexico and no doubt elsewhere in Latin America: *Carvajal se tardó en responder, traspiraba* (EM, Mex.) 'Carvajal took time to answer; he was perspiring', Sp. *. . . tardó en contestar.*

36.8 'Still' (*Todavía* and *aún* are discussed at 35.7.3.)

A very frequent construction is *continuar* or, more commonly, *seguir* followed by the gerund (**continuar a hacer algo*, 'to continue to do something', cf. French *continuer à faire quelquechose*, is not Spanish). *Seguir* is more often used before adjectives and participles, i.e. one says *sigue enfermo* 'he's still ill/sick' rather than *continúa enfermo*:

Te has dado cuenta de que sigues llevando puesta la chaqueta del pijama (JMM, Sp., dialogue)	You've realized that you're still wearing wearing your pyjama/US 'pajama' jacket
Continuaban/Seguían viéndose	They went on seeing one another
Pero ella sigue soltera (CF, Mex., dialogue)	But she's still unmarried
Negó con firmeza su culpabildad, como continuaría haciendo hasta el día del juicio (ES, Sp.)	He firmly denied his guilt, as he was to go on doing until Judgement day

(1) In parts of Latin America *siempre* 'always' can, like the French *toujours*, mean 'still': *¿siempre vives en Quito?* 'Are you still living in Quito?', *¿siempre quiere una ducha?* 'do you still want a shower' (MVLl, Pe., dialogue, Sp. *¿todavía quiere.,..?*).

36.9 Dates

36.9.1 Saying and writing dates

Months are not written with a capital letter in Spanish: *el veintitrés de marzo* '23 March'. The usual way of saying dates is *quince de mayo de dos mil veinte* 'fifteenth of May 2020', *dos de abril de dos mil cuatro* 'April the second 2004'. The ordinal numbers ('first', 'third', etc.) are not used, the only exception being *primero de . . .* 'the first of'. The form *el uno de . . .* is common in Spain, and although some grammarians criticize it the Academy does not object. *Primero de* is preferred in Latin America.

The format used for dates in Spain is the same as in most of Europe: day-month-year, e.g. *17 de junio de 2015* or *17-06-2015*. In Latin America, the North-American format, month-day-year, is often used, especially in Mexico and Cuba, as in *junio 17 de 2015*, *06-17-2015*; but the European format is common in South America.

For the use and non-use of the definite article with years and in dates see 3.2.20b.

(1) Important: 'on the nth of m' is translated without a preposition meaning 'on': *salimos de Montevideo el veinticinco de febrero*' 'we left Montevideo on 25 February'.

36.9.2 Decades

Seco (1998, 150), says that *una década* is a decade, which can only start in a year that is a multiple of ten, e.g. 2020–29, whereas *el decenio* simply means any period of ten years. But *El País*, *Libro de estilo* (2014, item '*décadas*'), says *década* means any period of ten years and advocates *decenio* for 'decade'. *La Jornada* (Mex.) and *La Nación* (Arg.) seem to use the words interchangeably.

Los años noventa translates 'the nineties': *a principios de los años cuarenta Cantinflas era aún el de películas divertidísimas* (JA, Mex.) 'at the beginning of the forties Cantinflas was still making (lit. 'the one of') very amusing films'.

One can also say *la década de los cincuenta*, but Seco considers this long-winded. The formula *los cincuentas* 'the fifties', *los noventas* 'the nineties' is sometimes found, but is condemned by Seco as an Anglicism.

36.10 Miscellaneous time expressions

36.10.1 Telling the time

Except where specified, the following examples reflect European usage. Variants will be heard in the Latin-American republics.

(**a**) Asking the time (12-hour clock):

¿Qué hora es? What time is it?
¿Qué hora tiene? What time do you make it?
¿Qué hora será? I wonder what time it is
¿A qué hora viene/empieza? What time is (s)he coming/does it start?

¿Qué horas son? is often used in Latin America and occasionally in Spain.

(**b**) Telling the exact time:

Es la una (*en punto*) it's one o'clock (exactly)
Son las dos, las tres, etc. it's 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock
Es la una de la mañana/de la tarde it's one in the morning/afternoon
Son las cuatro y cinco it's five past/after four. In Mexico also *son las cuatro con cinco minutos*
Son las cinco y cuarto/y media It's 5.15/5.30
Son las siete y veinticinco it's 7.25
Son las ocho menos cuarto it's 7.45
Son las nueve menos diez it's 8.50. (Also *diez minutos para las nueve* in parts of Latin America)
A las ocho menos cuarto at 7.45 (Mex. *al cuarto para las ocho*)
Son y media/cuarto it's thirty/fifteen minutes past
Son menos diez/y cinco it's ten to/five past
Empezará a las diez de la noche it'll begin at 10 p.m.
Falta poco para las cuatro it's nearly 4 o'clock
Los autobuses salen a menos veinte the buses leave at twenty to (the hour)
Los autobuses salen a las horas (*exactas*) *y a las medias* the buses leave at 30 minutes past and on the hour
Son y media pasadas it's gone half past
Van a dar las doce it's just coming up to twelve
Acaba de dar la una the clock's just struck one
Acaban de dar las dos the clock's just struck two
Cuando daba la última campanada de las cuatro on the last stroke of four
La consulta es de/desde nueve a once the doctor's surgery is from 9 to 11
Al filo de la medianoche (poetic) at exactly midnight

(1) The *NGLE* 41.6t advises against constructions, occasionally heard, like ?*es las siete* for *son las siete.*

(**c**) Approximate time

(*Ya*) *han dado las siete* it's already gone seven
Son las ocho más o menos it's about eight o'clock
Son pasadas las ocho (not **después de las ocho*)/*son las ocho pasadas/ya pasan de las ocho* 'it's gone eight/past eight'
Son las tres y poco/algo it's just after three
Son las tres como mucho it's three o'clock at the latest
Son cerca de las nueve it's nearly nine o'clock
Deben de ser las/cerca de las nueve it must be nine o'clock/nearly nine, or *serán las nueve*

Llegaré a eso de/sobre las dos de la mañana I'll be there around two a.m.
Serían las siete de la tarde It must have been seven p.m.
No acabaré hasta después de las tres/hasta pasadas las tres I won't finish until after three

36.10.2 The 24-hour clock

El tren sale a las quince horas The train leaves at 15:00
El avión llegó a las diecisiete (*horas*) *y quince* The plane arrived at 17:15

36.10.3 Times of the day

a primera hora de la mañana/por la mañana temprano early in the morning
por la mañana (Lat. Am. *a/en la mañana* in the morning)
a media mañana in the middle of the morning
a mediodía at noon
a la hora de comer/almorzar at lunchtime (2–4 p.m. in Spain and several Lat.-Am. countries)
a la hora de la merienda at teatime (i.e. around 4 p.m.)
a la hora de cenar at dinner time (9–11 p.m. in Spain and several Lat.-Am. countries)
buenos días good morning (greeting)
buenas tardes (midday to 8 p.m.) good afternoon/evening (greeting)
después de comer/cenar 'after lunch/dinner'. 'Lunch' = *almorzar* in Latin America. The verb is not much used in Spain, but *el almuerzo* '(early) lunch' is
por la tarde in the afternoon (midday until about 8 p.m.)
al atardecer/anochecer in the evening
por la noche at night
a (*la*) *medianoche* at midnight
al amanecer/de madrugada at dawn
Ven esta noche/de noche Come tonight
Ven por la noche Come at night-time
buenas noches good evening/goodnight (greeting and goodbye)
¡buenas! (familiar style) 'morning!'/'afternoon!'

(1) *La tarde* does not coincide with either 'afternoon' or 'evening': it is the time between midday and sunset, but the precise boundaries are rather vague. *La madrugada* is between midnight and sunrise, although this period can also be called *la mañana.*

(2) The *NGLE* 21.9g reports that in much of Latin America *buenos días* is said until 12 in the morning, and *buenas tardes* thereafter until 1800 or 1900. In Spain *buenos días* tends to be used until around lunchtime (1400–1500) perhaps a little earlier, and *buenas tardes* after lunch until after sunset.

(3) *Buenos días* and *buenas tardes* can be used for goodbyes if preceded by some word or phrase of farewell like *adiós*, *hasta luego*: *adiós*, *buenos días/hasta luego, buenas tardes*.

36.10.4 Frequency

dos veces a la semana/al día/por semana/día twice a week/a day
cada media hora/dos o tres días every half hour /every two or three days
todos los días every day
El sábado/Los sábados no trabajo I don't work on Saturdays
todos los días entre semana every day from Monday to Friday

For *cada día* and *todos los días* see 10.6 and 10.17.

36.10.5 **Miscellaneous expressions**

—¿Qué (*día*) *es hoy? —Domingo*	'What day is it today?' 'Sunday'
Hoy es lunes, martes, etc.	Today's Monday, Tuesday, etc.
Hoy es el/estamos a 28 de marzo	Today's the 28th of March
—¿A cuántos estamos? ¿Qué fecha es hoy? —(*Estamos*) *a 17 de enero de 2019*	'What's the date today?' 'The 17th of January 2019'
Estamos a mediados/principios/finales/ últimos/de mes	We're at the middle/beginning/end of the month
el 5 del corriente (business language)	the 5th of this month
Saldremos el viernes 28 (*veintiocho*) *al/a mediodía*	We'll leave on Friday the 28th at midday
la semana pasada/el mes/el año pasado	last week, month, year
Se casaron el 20 de julio pasado	They got married on the 20th of last July
Nació en (*el mes de*) *abril del año pasado*	(S)he was born in April last year
al cabo de un año	a year later
a los cinco minutos quería irse	after 5 minutes (s)he wanted to leave
al día siguiente	the following/next day
de hoy en ocho días	a week today
ayer/anteayer	yesterday/the day before yesterday

36.11 **Translating 'next'**

The word *próximo* means 'coming', so it can only refer to the future: *el año próximo/que viene* 'next year', *la próxima parada* 'next stop' (i.e. the one immediately coming). When 'following' could replace 'next' in English, *siguiente* must be used: *al día siguiente* (not *próximo*) *volvieron a casa* 'the next/following day they returned home', *me bajé en la parada siguiente* 'I got out at the next/following stop':

al año siguiente, el/al mes/la semana que viene (but *que viene* is not used with the months: *el próximo mes de julio* 'next July')	next year/month/week
La próxima vez que nos veamos, te llevo tus mil quinientos dólares (GZ, Mex. dialogue)	The next time we see one another I'll bring you your 1,500 dollars

36.12 **Age**

The word *año*(*s*) cannot usually be omitted when talking about age, at least on the first mention of the topic: *al año andaba*, *a los cuatro hablaba dos idiomas*, *a los cinco leía* '(s)he was walking by the time (s)he was one, speaking two languages at four and reading at five'.

Spanish says 'to have' (*tener*) an age, English says 'to be an age'.

Mi hermano tiene quince años	My brother is fifteen
A los 15 años se mudó a La Habana (*Latina*, New York)	At fifteen she moved to Havana
—¿Cuántos años tienes? —Veinte (the word *años* can be omitted only when answering this question)	'How old are you?' 'I'm twenty'
¿A qué edad andan los niños?	At what age do children walk?
Acaba de cumplir los cincuenta años	(S)he has just turned fifty

Andará por los cuarenta (*años* can be omitted)	(S)he must be around forty
Tiene sus sesenta años	(S)he's a good sixty years old
un joven de quince años	a young man/youth of fifteen
¿Qué tiempo tiene?/¿Qué edad tiene?	How old's the baby? (when it could be less than one)

36.13 Omission of preposition before certain expressions of time

No preposition is used with some words and expressions. These are:

(**a**) Days of the week, and weeks: *nos vemos el lunes/el viernes* 'we're meeting on Monday/Friday'.

(**b**) Dates: *nos vemos el trece de abril* 'we're meeting on 13 April'.

(1) In informal Latin-American Spanish prepositions are omitted before some other words, as in *la ocasión que te vi* (Spain *. . . en que te vi*) 'the occasion I saw you', *cuando la mañana siguiente me anunció que . . .* (AM, Mex., Sp. *a la mañana siguiente*) 'when he announced to me the following morning that . . .', *. . . los funcionarios destituidos injustamente los últimos 18 meses* (*La Prensa*, Pan.) 'State employees unfairly dismissed during the last 18 months', more formally *durante los últimos 18 meses*, *. . . murieron la tarde de ayer en un accidente automovilístico* (*La Prensa*, Hon. = *murieron en la tarde de ayer*) '. . . died yesterday afternoon/evening in a car accident', *en partido amistoso jugado la tarde del sábado* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'in a friendly match played on Saturday afternoon'.

37 Conjunctions and discourse markers

This chapter discusses the following words:

- *pero, sino, mas* 'but' (Section 37.1)
- *o/u* or (Section 37.2)
- *y/e* and (Section 37.3)
- *que, de que* that (Section 37.4)
- *porque/pues/como* and other words meaning 'because', 'since . . .' (Section 37.5.1)
- *ya que/puesto que/como* and other meaning 'since'/'seeing that' (Section 37.5.2)
- *aunque, y eso que* and other words meaning 'although' (Section 37.6)
- *con tal de que, a menos que* and other expressions of condition and exception (Section 37.7)
- words indicating purpose (Section 37.8)
- *de modo/manera que* and other words expressing result (Section 37.9)
- Subordinating conjunctions of time words (Section 37.10)
- Discourse markers (Section 37.11)

'Discourse markers' are words and phrases like 'however', 'nevertheless', 'anyway', 'well . . .', 'moreover' that are used to link elements of a text or conversation.

Some Spanish subordinating conjunctions, e.g. *que*, *cuando*, *sin que*, *después de que*, *antes de que*, *para que*, etc., are sometimes or always followed by the subjunctive and these are also discussed in Chapter 20. They are merely noted in the appropriate section of this chapter.

37.1 *Pero, sino, mas*

All of these translate 'but'. *Mas* (no accent) is virtually extinct, but it is occasionally found in flowery written language and the *NGLE* 31.10v notes that it is apparently coming back into fashion among the youth of Caracas.

The distinction between *pero* and *sino* is crucial.

(a) ***Sino*** corrects a preceding remark: compare *las manzanas no están maduras* ***sino*** *verdes* 'the apples aren't ripe but unripe' ('ripe' is corrected) and *las manzanas no están maduras* ***pero*** *las peras sí* 'the apples aren't ripe but the pears are' (*no están maduras* is not being corrected or withdrawn).

Sino therefore occurs most often after negations of the sort 'not A but (instead) B', and it is especially common in the formulas *no solo/sólo . . . sino* (*que*) . . . 'not only . . . but . . .', and *no porque . . . sino* 'not because . . . but' (*no porque* is followed by the subjunctive: 20.4.4c). Examples:

No quiero vino sino agua	I don't want wine but water
no tú, sino él, no este/éste sino ese/ése	not you, but him/not this one but that
No dormían en una pensión sino en un hotel de lujo	They weren't sleeping in a *pensión*/guest-house but in a luxury hotel
No vino sola sino con su marido	She didn't come alone but with her husband

No porque sea algo incorrecto sino porque dificulta la lectura (*El País*, Sp.)	Not because it is something that is incorrect but because it makes reading difficult
Pero yo puedo ayudarte, no porque sepa más que tú . . . sino porque escucho muchas cosas (JV, Mex., dialogue)	But I can help you, not because I know more than you . . . but because I hear a lot of things

Before a verb *sino que* must be used:

No sólo le creo sino que estoy dispuesto a ayudarlo (GZ, Mex., dialogue)	I don't only believe you but I'm prepared to help you
No ponía, sino que arrojaba las tazas sobre la bandeja (CRG, Sp.)	She was not so much placing as flinging the cups onto the tray

Pero is not possible in any of the preceding examples, but in the following examples it is required because the initial statement is not being corrected or withdrawn:

Habla francés, pero mal	(S)he speaks French, but badly
No tiene dinero, pero es feliz	(S)he has no money, but (s)he's happy
Pero ¿es posible?	But can it (really) be possible?
Tenía un poco más de cuarenta años pero su peculiaridad consistía en fingir que era niña (CF, Mex.)	She was slightly over forty, but her peculiarity consisted in pretending to be a girl

(1) Important: words following *pero* can be emphasized with *sí* (with an accent): *no soy de humores fáciles, pero sí predecibles* (LR, Col., dialogue) 'I'm not given to passing moods but predictable ones', *pero sí lo soportó, porque los seres humanos somos capaces de aguantar lo inaguantable* (RM, Sp.) 'but she *did* bear it because we human beings are capable of bearing the unbearable'. This should not be confused with the construction *pero si . . .* (no accent) discussed at 35.4.8.

(2) *Sino* often means 'except', especially in questions and after negatives: *¿qué puedo decir sino que lo siento?* 'what can I say but/except that I'm sorry?', *¿por quién sino por ti habría subido las escaleras cantando a gritos 'aprendimos a quererte'?* (ABE, Pe.) 'for whom except for you would I have gone up the stairs singing "we learned to love you" at the top of my voice?', *ni él pudo entenderlo sino como un milagro del amor* (GGM, Col.) 'even he couldn't understand it except as a miracle of love', *nadie sino* (or *excepto*) *tú sabe hacerlo* 'no one knows how to do it except you', *el pueblo mexicano . . . no cree ya sino en la Virgen de Guadalupe y en la Lotería Nacional* (OP, Mex.) 'the Mexican people now believe in nothing but the Virgin of Guadalupe and the National Lottery', *pero esa sabiduría no te tranquiliza ni reconforta sino todo lo contrario* (EL, Arg.) 'but that wisdom doesn't calm you down or comfort you – just the opposite'.

(4) *Sino* must not be confused (as it sometimes is in older or badly written texts) with *si no* 'if not'.

37.2 *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*. Spoken language often neglects to use *u*, and *o* is also sometimes retained if it is the first word in a sentence. *O* is also sometimes retained in the construction 'either . . . or': *o organizaciones estatales o privadas* 'either state organizations or private ones'.

(1) *O . . . o* 'either . . . or' is a frequently used phrase: *o lo sabes o no lo sabes* 'either you know it or you don't', *os digo que u os apartáis, u os araño* (dialogue in a popular novel, Sp.) 'I'm telling you, either you get out of my way or I'll scratch you'.

(2) *O* was often written with an accent when it appears alongside a digit so as to avoid confusion with zero: *4 ó 5* '4 or 5'. However, *El País* and the Academy now rule that the accent should not be written: *4 o 5.*

37.3 *Y*

'And', used much like its English equivalent. It is written and pronounced *e* before a word beginning with an *i* sound (i.e. 'ee'), e.g. *Miguel* ***e*** *Ignacio*, *padre* ***e*** *hijos*, but not before a *y* sound as in 'yacht': *carbón y hierro* 'coal and iron', *avionetas y yates* 'light planes and yachts'. *Y* is also sometimes used when it means 'what about?': *¿y Ignacio?* 'what about Ignacio?'. Substitution of *e* for *y* is not always made in spontaneous speech, but careful speakers observe the rule.

(1) 'English' constructions like **es para él y mí*, **es para ti o mí* 'it's for him or me', 'it's for you or me' must be avoided: *es para él y para mí*, *es para ti o para mí*.

(2) The Academy (*NGLE* 31.2ñ) recommends modestly placing the first-person pronoun last in phrases like *Miguel, Antonio y yo* 'Miguel, Antonio and I/me'.

(3) The *NGLE* 31.4s dislikes the 'English' form *y/o* as in *hombres y/o mujeres* 'men and/or women, but offers no clear alternative.

(4) As was mentioned earlier, it often means 'what about?': *¿y el perro?* 'what about the dog?', *¿y la democracia?* 'what about democracy?', *¿y qué?* 'so what?/who cares?', *—Yo ya terminé—. ¿Y yo? —No. Tú no* (MC, Mex., dialogue) '"I've finished already." "What about me?" "No. You haven't"'.

37.4 *Que*

Que is an overworked word. It has at least four separate uses in Spanish:

(a) As the most common relative pronoun: *la mujer que vi* 'the woman that/whom I saw', *el año en que nací* 'the year I was born in'. This use is discussed in Chapter 39. For sentences like *llovía que daba miedo* see 39.2 note 2.

(b) *Qué* with an accent means 'what' and is best thought of as an entirely different word. It is discussed at 28.4.

(c) *Que* may mean 'than' in comparisons: *es más alto que su hermano* 'he's taller than his brother'. See Chapter 6.

(d) As a subordinating conjunction: see the next section.

37.4.1 *Que* as a subordinating conjunction

Que introduces subordinate clauses in the same way as the English conjunction 'that' as in 'he said that it's true'. It differs from the latter in that it cannot be omitted (see 37.4.6 for rare exceptions):

Dice que viene	(S)he says (that) (s)he's coming
Cree que no ha pagado	(S)he thinks (that) (s)he hasn't paid
Parece que va a llover	It seems (that) it's going to rain

However, the limited use in Spanish of a personal infinitive construction found in the English 'he told **me to come**' makes this use of *que* much more common than the English 'that':

Te aconsejo que no lo hagas	I advise you not **to do** it
Quiero que vengas	I want you **to come**
Les pidió que no firmasen/firmaran	(S)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 20.

37.4.2 *De* before *que*

In certain circumstances a subordinate clause must be introduced by *de que*. This is necessary:

(**a**) After noun phrases when *que* is a conjunction and not a relative pronoun. English does not differentiate between 'that' as a relative pronoun and 'that' as a subordinating conjunction, so 'the idea that he liked . . .' is ambiguous out of context. If 'which' or 'who(m)' could replace 'that' in the English translation, *que* alone is possible in Spanish, otherwise *de que* should be used:

This is the idea that (= which) (s)he likes	*Esta/Ésta es la idea* ***que*** *le gusta* (relative pronoun; *de que* impossible)
The idea that (s)he likes bullfighting is absurd ('which' impossible)	*La idea de que le gustan las corridas es absurda* (subordinating conjunction)

More examples:

Me desesperaba ante la idea de que mi madre debía morirse un día (ES, Arg.)	I despaired at the idea that my mother would have to die one day
Tengo la certeza de que . . .	I'm certain that . . .
Mis papás tuvieron miedo de que me fuera a enfermar de tristeza (ES, Mex., dialogue. Spain . . . *de que fuera a enfermar*)	My parents felt afraid I was going to get sick with sadness
el argumento/la creencia de que . . .	the argument/belief that . . .
la causa de que no llegara/llegase a tiempo	the cause of his/her not arriving on time

(b) After a number of common verbs that require the preposition *de*

me acuerdo de que . . .	I remember that . . .
nos dimos cuenta de que	we realized that . . .
me olvidaba de que . . .	I was forgetting that . . .
se convenció de que . . .	(s)he became convinced that . . .
se trata de que . . .	it's about . . ./it's a question of . . .

For *informar de que*, *hablar de que*, *dudar de que*, *advertir de que* and *avisar de que*, see the notes to 37.4.3.

(c) After a number of verbs denoting emotional states, e.g.

aburrirse de que	to be bored by the fact that . . .
alegrarse de que	to be happy that . . .
asustarse de que	to be frightened that . . .
avergonzarse de que	to be ashamed that . . .
cansarse de que	to get tired that . . .
dolerse de que	to feel pity that . . .
entristecerse de que	to be saddened that . . .

extrañarse de que	to be puzzled that . . .
lamentarse de que	to bewail the fact that . . .
sorprenderse de que	to be surprised that . . .

Examples:

Se aburre de que Gene Kelly baile siempre con Cyd Charisse (GCI, Cu., dialogue, i.e. in the film *Singin' in the Rain*)	He gets bored with the fact that Gene Kelly always dances with Cyd Charisse
Al escuchar la lancha se extrañó de que regresaran tan pronto (EM, Mex.)	When he heard the launch/boat he was surprised that they were back so soon

For further remarks about the use of the subjunctive with these verbs see 20.3.12–13.

Not all pronominal verbs of emotion allow this construction with *de que*. For example, one says *te deprimiste porque Ana no te llamaba* 'you got depressed because Ana wasn't phoning you', but not **te deprimiste de que Ana no te llamara/llamara*; also *se emocionaron porque . . .*'they got excited because . . .', not **se emocionaron de que.*. Likewise *horrorizarse porque* 'to be horrified because . . .', *entusiasmarse porque* 'to be enthusiastic because . . .', *indignarse porque* 'to be indignant because . . .'.

(d) After certain adjectives and adverbial phrases that are normally followed by *de*:

estoy seguro/convencido de que . . .	I'm sure/convinced that . . .
estamos contentos de que . . .	we're pleased that . . .
estoy cansado/harto de que . . .	I'm tired/fed up with . . .
soy consciente de que . . .	I'm aware that . . .
estoy hasta la coronilla de que . . .	I'm sick to death with . . .

(e) After subordinators that include *de*:

antes de que/después de que llegara/llegase	before/after (s)he arrived
a condición de que . . .	on condition that . . .
a cambio de que . . .	in exchange for . . .
a pesar de que . . .	despite the fact that . . .
con tal de que . . .	provided that . . .
en lugar de que . . .	instead of . . .
con el objeto de que . . .	with the aim of . . .

(1) There is a colloquial tendency, strong in Latin America and spreading in Spain, to drop the *de* in these constructions: *pero estoy segura* ***que*** *es lo que haces . . .* (LG, Sp., dialogue) 'but I'm sure that that is what you're doing', *para que te convenzas* ***que*** *la dignidad no se come* (GGM, Col., dialogue) 'to convince you that (lit. 'so you convince yourself') that one can't eat dignity'. This construction, called *queísmo* by grammarians, is found even in the Academy's own publications, e.g. . . . *tenemos la impresión que . . .*, *GDLE*, 2188. It is fast becoming the norm among young Spaniards although older speakers may find it 'careless'; but the battle against it is probably lost.

(2) *Antes que* 'before' may be used instead of *antes de que* in many regions, cf. *venda ese gallo antes que sea demasiado tarde* (GGM, Col., dialogue) 'sell that cockerel before it's too late', *lo conozco desde antes que tú nacieras* (MVLl, Pe., dialogue) 'I've known him since before you were born', *antes que te cases, mira lo que haces* (Spanish proverb) 'before you marry, look what you're doing'. *Antes que . . .* is more common in Latin America, though *antes de que* is frequent there, especially in writing. *Antes que* is accepted by the Academy (DPD 52).

(3) *Antes que . . .* also means 'rather than' on both continents: *cualquier cosa antes que eso* 'anything but/rather than that', *. . . para evitar que resulte un nuevo problema antes que la solución deseada* (*El Comercio*, Ec.) '. . . so as to avoid it becoming another problem rather than the desired solution', *. . . el aprecio por las cosas bellas antes que por las que tienen éxito* (AM, Mex.) '. . . the appreciation of beautiful things rather than successful ones'.

37.4.3 *Dequeísmo*

There is a tendency on both continents to insert *de* before *que* after verbs that do not require it, especially *decir* 'say', *afirmar* 'claim', *creer* 'believe', *sostener* 'maintain', *negar* 'deny', *pensar* 'think', *resultar* 'to turn out to be', *confesar* 'confess', *argüir* 'argue', etc. Examples (a question mark denotes sentences that are widely rejected as sub-standard): ?*dice de que no viene* (for *dice que no viene*) '(s)he says (s)he's not coming', ?*creo de que no es verdad* (for *creo que no es verdad*) 'I think it isn't true'.

This use of *de que* for *que* (called *dequeísmo*) is rejected by educated speakers and should be avoided by foreigners but it is not uncommon in popular language. It may prevail in the future, although its fate is probably still undecided.

(1) *Hablar de que* is correctly used for 'to talk *about . . .*' in sentences like *cuando hablábamos de que no sabemos cómo somos* (ABV, Sp., dialogue) 'when we were talking about our not knowing what we are like'.

(2) *Dudar de que* is an accepted variant of *dudar que* 'to doubt': *nadie dudó* (*de*) *que dijera la verdad* 'no one doubted that (s)he told the truth', *ni a nosotros se nos ocurría dudar de que él abandonase su camino* (SP, Sp.) 'it didn't even occur to us to doubt that he would abandon his vocation (lit. 'way')'. Note also *dudo de tus intenciones* 'I have my doubts about your intentions'.

(3) *Informar a alguien de algo* 'to inform someone of something' is correct, so *la OMS informa* ***de*** *que han sido registrados 2.270 casos de neumonía atípica* (*El Mundo*, Sp.) 'WHO reports that 2,270 cases of "atypical pneumonia" (i.e. SARS) have been recorded'. *Informar que* is also used, especially in Latin America, but the style book of *El País* 2014, condemns it. The construction *te lo informaré* 'I'll let you know', *nos lo informaron* 'they let us know' is heard in Latin America, but not in Spain.

(4) *Advertir que* means 'to notice that'. *Advertir de* means 'to inform/warn', so *nos advirtieron de que había retrasos* 'they informed/warned us there were delays'. However, for explicit threats one uses *advertir que*: *te advierto que, si no trabajas, no cobras* (not *de que . . .*) 'I'm warning you that if you don't work you don't get paid' (example from *GDLE* 34.1.5.2).

(5) The construction with *avisar* 'to inform'/'to warn' is with *que* or *de que*. 'To advise' is *aconsejar*; *un aviso* is 'a warning', 'a notice' or, in Latin America, 'an advertisement' (Sp. *un anuncio*).

37.4.4 *Que* at the head of a phrase or sentence

Que may appear at the head of a sentence or clause, especially in speech. Its main functions are:

(a) To reinforce the idea that what follows is something expected, something repeated or something that is being insisted on. In this case some verb like *decir* or *preguntar* may have been omitted:

¿Que cómo se llama mi película?	(did you ask) What's my film called?
¿Que por qué no van obreros al teatro?	(you're asking me) Why don't workers go to the theatre?
Que no quiero verla	(I said that) I don't want to see her/it
Oye, que aquí pone que no hay que abrirlo	Listen, it says here that it mustn't be opened

¡Que sí! ¡Que no!	Yes!/No! (impatient repetition)
¡Socorro! ¡Que me ahogo!	Help! I'm drowning!

(b) As a colloquial subordinator of cause. It is often used to connect one idea to another where English uses a pause represented in writing by a dash:

¡Rápido! ¡Rápido! ¡Que se va!	Quick! Quick! It's going! (e.g. the train)
No te cases con tu novio, que ese/ése va a por tu dinero (AGa, Sp., dialogue)	Don't marry your boyfriend – he's after your money
No lo inclines tanto, que se caen los papeles (JJM, Pan., dialogue)	Don't tilt it so much – the papers will fall off
No me apuntes con esa madre, que se te puede salir un balazo (MC, Mex., dialogue. *Madre* here is popular Mexican, avoided in polite speech. *Balazo* = *tiro* in Spain)	Don't point that damned thing at me – you might let fly a bullet

(c) Colloquially, to show that the truth has dawned after some doubt:

¡Ah! Que usted es el fontanero (Lat. Am. *el plomero*)	Ah – so you're the plumber then . . .
Que tú eres entonces el que lo hizo	So you're the one who did it . . .
¿Que no quieres ir conmigo?	You mean you don't want to go with me?

(d) To translate 'that' in colloquial sentences meaning 'it was so . . . that . . .':

Tengo un sueño que no veo	I'm so sleepy I could drop (lit. 'I can't see')
Estaba la habitación que no cabía un alfiler	The room was so packed you couldn't get a pin in it

(e) With the subjunctive in commands, exhortations and wishes, e.g. *que venga en seguida* 'tell him/her to come/have him/her come immediately', *que te acuerdes de escribirnos* 'remember to write to us'. See 21.6 for details.

(f) To mean 'the fact that', in which case it is likely to take the subjunctive. See 20.3.18 for further discussion.

37.4.5 *Que* in indirect questions

Decir que may mean 'to ask' – at least in Spain. *Que* is also used optionally after *preguntar* 'to ask':

Te dijo que si estaba la cena lista (CRG, Sp., dialogue)	He asked you if dinner was ready
Yo me pregunto (*que*) *dónde estará ella estudiando*	I wonder where she's studying
Uno de los jugadores me preguntó que si quería ser porrista del equipo de fut americano (ES, Mex., dialogue. *Porrista* = *animadora* and *fut* = *fútbol* in Spain)	One of the players asked me if I wanted to be a cheerleader for the American football team
Le pregunté (*que*) *qué hacía allí*	I asked him/her what (s)he was doing there

37.4.6 Omission of conjunction *que*

Que is occasionally omitted, but much less often than the English 'that':

(a) after certain verbs, e.g. *rogar que* 'to request', *esperar que* 'to hope that', *solicitar que* 'to ask/request that'. This construction is practically confined to business letters and other official or very formal language, but it is also found in sub-standard language. Foreigners should avoid it:

Les ruego me envíen las facturas en papel (advert. Sp.)	Please send me the bills/invoices in paper format
No importa le tilden de bufón (popular press, Sp., better *no importa que le tilden . . .*)	It doesn't matter if they call him a clown
Solicitan se les solucione la deuda que mantiene el Estado con ellos (*La Prensa*, Pan.), for *solicitan que . . .*	They are requesting settlement of the debt that the State has incurred towards them

(b) In subordinate and relative clauses introduced by *que* so as to avoid excessive use of *que*. This is probably also confined to formal written language (# marks the point of omission):

desde este punto de vista, que pienso # comparten muchos españoles	from this point of view, which I think many Spaniards share
Me contestó con una serie de argumentos que supongo # están de moda hoy día	(S)he replied with a series of arguments which I suppose are fashionable nowadays
. . . la turbia tempestad que sabía # se cernía sobre mi futuro (EL, Sp.)	. . . the murky storm that I knew was looming over my future

37.4.7 Replacement of subordinating *que* and finite verb by an infinitive

For a discussion of sentences like *dice estar enferma* 'she says she's ill/sick' (for *dice que está enferma*) see 22.2.1.

37.4.8 Miscellaneous examples of *que*

The bracket indicates that the *que* is optional:

Qué bien (*que*) *lo hemos pasado* (the redundant *que* is colloquial)	What a nice time we've had
y él habla que habla (colloquial)	and he kept talking on and on
Yo venga a pedirle el divorcio y él que no (*venga a* is a colloquial form suggesting tedious repetition)	I kept on asking him for a divorce and he wouldn't have it/kept saying no
Lucho por conseguir comprensión, (*que*) *no amor*	I'm struggling to get understanding, not love
¡Tonto! Eran monos, (*que*) *no alienígenas*	Fool! They were monkeys, not aliens
¡Cuidado que sois/(Lat. Am. *son*) *pesados!*	Heavens, are you pests!

37.5 Causal conjunctions

The most common are:

porque because	*en vista de que* seeing that	*puesto que* because
ya que because/since	*como* as/since	*pues* see 37.5.3

37.5.1 *Porque*

Porque means 'because'; *por qué*, spelt and pronounced differently (the *qué* is stressed), means 'why'. The noun *el porqué* means 'the reason why'. *Porque* may occasionally require the subjunctive: see 20.4.4c. The difference between *porque* 'because' and *por qué* 'why' is crucial:

No saben porque llegaron tarde	They don't know because they arrived late
No saben por qué llegaron tarde	They don't know *why* they arrived late

(1) *Porque* may be used as an alternative to *para que* after those words which allow *por*, e.g. *esforzarse por* 'to make an effort to . . .', *tener prisa por . . .* 'to be in a hurry to . . .' (see the section on *por* and *para*, 38.17.6). For the difference between *por qué* and *para qué* 'why' see 28.10.

(2) *Por* is intimately associated with the idea of cause, e.g. *te lo mereces, por respondón* 'serves you right for always answering back', *se perdieron por no haber comprado un mapa* 'they got lost as a result of not having bought a map'. See 38.17.1 for more examples.

(3) *Porque* and *por qué* can never be used to translate 'that's why' or 'that's the reason why' in sentences like 'he's sick, that's why he hasn't come to work'; see 41.4.

37.5.2 *Como, ya que, puesto que, que, en vista de que*

All of these may mean 'since' (i.e. 'given that', 'in view of the fact that') when it is a subordinator of cause, but in phrases like 'since Tuesday', 'since I was young' *desde* is used and is discussed at 36.3.7.

Puesto que quieres que me quede, me quedo	Since you want me to stay, I'm staying
La reunión se aplazó en vista de que no vino casi nadie	The meeting was postponed since hardly anyone turned up
Ya que no tenía rivales . . . podía pasear a cualquier hora por cualquier lugar (EM, Mex.)	Since he had no rivals/competition, he could move around at any time anywhere

Como, when used thus, must appear 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/since/as I had no appetite, I didn't eat' is correct. Compare also *no lo hice como me dijiste* 'I didn't do it the way you told me to', and *no lo hice, como me dijiste* '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 (CRG, Sp., dialogue)	It's even more ill-mannered to hint that, since I'm a woman, it's assumed that I'm nobody
Como se sentía cansado y no quería que le molestaran, les ordenó que escribieran una composición (SG, Mex.)	As he was feeling tired and didn't want them to bother him, he told them [the schoolchildren] to write an essay

(1) The form *como que* for *ya que* 'since'/'as', when placed before the main verb, should generally be avoided. Seco (1998, 118), censures it as a Catalanism and *como* alone should be used: *como no es posible no podemos hacerlo*, 'since it is not possible, we cannot do it', not ?*como que no es posible . . .*

Placed after the main verb it is, however, found on both continents to mean 'as though': *vivimos en un ambiente que nos asfixia. Hacemos como que no pasa nada* (RB, Ch., dialogue) 'we live in an atmosphere that is stifling us. We act as though nothing were happening'.

When used emphatically it may, in colloquial Spanish and usually with an ironic tone, introduce an explanation of a fact: *claro que es verdad. ¡Como que lo he dicho yo!* 'of course it's true. *I* said it!'

(2) Important: *como* with the subjunctive may translate 'if' in conditional sentences; see 29.8.2.

(3) *Como* meaning 'since'/'as'/'seeing that' sometimes occurs with an *-ra* subjunctive verb form, as in *—Quizá —dijo Víctor. Y como Arturo no replicara, añadió—: Bueno, me subo* (M. Delibes, Sp.) '"Perhaps," Victor said. And as Arturo didn't reply, he added '"OK, I'm getting in"' (i.e. *ya que . . ./puesto que . . . + replicó*), *y como el Macetón se quedara en silencio, se puso de pie* (MS, Mex.) 'and as Macetón remained silent, he stood up'.

(4) *Comoquiera* is occasionally used in literature to mean 'since'/'as': *Lucrecia se detuvo para observar mi reacción. Comoquiera que yo permanecía impasible, prosiguió . . .* (LS, Sp.) 'Lucrecia paused to watch my reaction. Since/Seeing that I remained impassive, she continued . . .', *comoquiera que el viejo era el anfitrión, pidió a Sherard que se pusiese elegante para cenar* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'since the old man was the host, he asked Sherard to make himself smart/elegant for dinner'.

37.5.3 *Pues*

Pues has numerous uses.

(a) *Pues* meaning 'because':

In Spain *pues* may be an elegant written variation on *porque* when used by a skilled writer, but it can sound affected. The grammarian Gili y Gaya says that most people give up using it when they grow out of adolescence.

However, *pues* meaning *porque* is frequent in Mexican speech and writing, e.g. *la mujer pide clemencia para el cazador, pues este/éste no conoce la ley que prohíbe abatir a los animales salvajes* (JV, Mex.) 'the woman is asking for clemency for the hunter because the latter doesn't know about the law that forbids killing wild animals', *pero si lo único que hago es elegir mi destino libremente pues no me parece que haya nada malo en eso* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'but the only thing I'm doing is freely following my destiny because it doesn't seem to me that there's anything wrong in that'.

(b) 'In that case . . .', 'then'. This use is very frequent in everyday speech:

—No queremos comer ahora—. Pues, cuando ustedes quieran . . . (or *entonces/en ese caso*)	'We don't want to eat now.' 'In that case, whenever you like . . .'
—No lo sabía. —Pues ya lo sabes	'I didn't know.' 'Well, you do now'
—No voy a encontrar ninguna tienda abierta—. Pues rompe las puertas (RM, Mex., dialogue)	'I'm not going to find any shops/stores open.' 'Then smash the doors down.'

(c) Like the English 'well', it may tone down an answer to a question, adding a modest or tentative note or perhaps showing that the speaker has thought for a moment before answering:

—¿En qué situación se encuentran las negociaciones entre los dos gobiernos? —Pues, el hecho es que no hay negociaciones	'What is the state of the negotiations between the two governments?' 'Well, the fact is, there are no negotiations'

—¿Quiénes estaban? —Pues . . . Manuel, Antonio, Margarita . . .'	'Who was there?' 'Er . . . Manuel, Antonio, Margarita . . .

(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! (ABV, Sp., dialogue)	'I thought he was sick.' 'Well he isn't' No, I can well imagine where she is. Well, she's going to hear what I've got to say!

(1) In some parts of Latin America and Northern Spain, conversation is sprinkled with *pues*: *oye pues*, *vámonos pues*, etc.

(2) Students of French should not confuse *pues* with the French word *puis* which means *después*, *entonces* or *luego*.

37.6 Concession

37.6.1 Phrases that introduce concessions ('although', etc.)

The main ways of introducing a concession are as follows (forms marked with an asterisk are typical of literary language):

aunque although	*aun cuando* even when	*por más que* however much
bien que although	*si bien* although	*a despecho de que** despite
y eso que despite the fact that	*a pesar de que*	*por mucho que* however much
así	*pese a que** despite	

All of these, except *y eso que* and *si bien*, may appear with the subjunctive and they are discussed at 20.4.10. *Por mucho que* is discussed at 20.5.2.

37.6.2 *Y eso que* and *si bien*

Y eso que 'although', 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 even though/despite the fact that I'd seen her two days before':

. . . y eso que no leo novelas eróticas (ABE, Pe.)	. . . .despite the fact I don't read erotic novels
—Qué paz se respira aquí —dijo—. Y eso que es el gran pueblo de la comarca— anoté (LS, Sp., dialogue)	'It's so peaceful here,' she said. 'Despite it being the main town in the region,' I added
Y eso que unos días antes del golpe había invitado a cenar a algunos de sus dirigentes . . . (JV, Mex.)	Despite the fact that a few days before the *coup* he'd invited some of its leaders to dinner . . .

Si bien is used like *y eso que* to refer only to an established fact (i.e. it cannot refer to the future):

Si bien la lluvia es frecuente, el verano inglés es a menudo agradable	Despite the fact that rain is frequent, the English summer is often pleasant
Si bien la guerra mundial había favorecido las exportaciones, una vez que esta/ésta concluyó todo se fue modificando (JA, Mex.)	Although the World War had favoured exports, once the latter ended everything started changing

(1) The usual word for 'although' is *aunque*, discussed at 20.4.10.

(2) *Y eso que* cannot come before the main clause: **y eso que es profesora, no sabe contar* 'despite the fact that she's a teacher, she can't count' is incorrect. *A pesar de ser profesora, no sabe contar . . .* or *no sabe contar, y eso que es profesora*.

37.7 Condition and exception

(**a**) The main conjunctions of condition are (all can be translated as 'provided that'/'as long as'):

con tal (*de*) *que* provided that	*siempre y cuando* provided that
siempre que provided that	*bajo* (*la*) *condición de que* on condition that
a condición de que on condition that	*mientras* (*no*) as long as

When these mean 'on condition that' they require the subjunctive and are discussed at 20.4.8a. *Siempre que* can also mean 'whenever', as in *siempre que voy a Madrid salgo a cenar con mis amigos* 'whenever I go to Madrid I go out to dinner with my friends'. *Mientras* may simply mean 'while', and is discussed at 20.4.9.

(b) The main conjunctions of exception are:

a menos que unless	*fuera de que* except	*salvo que* except
a no ser que unless	*excepto que* except	*como no* lest

All of these mean 'unless' and are discussed at 20.4.8b.

37.8 Subordinating conjunctions of purpose and aim

The most common are:

(a) 'in order that'/'so that'

para que	*de manera que**	*porque*
*de modo que**	*a que*	*de forma que**
a fin de que	*con el objeto de que*	

(b) lest/in order that not . . .

no sea que . . .	*no fuera que . . ./no fuese que . . .*

All conjunctions of purpose require the subjunctive and are discussed under 20.4.3. Those marked with an asterisk may also indicate result and are then followed by the indicative. See next section.

37.9 Subordinating conjunctions of result

These are phrases meaning 'so that':

de modo que	*de manera que*	*conque*
de forma que	*así que*	

De manera/forma/modo que can denote either a result or an intention: in the latter case they take the subjunctive. Compare *entraron silenciosamente de manera que nadie se dio cuenta* 'they entered quietly and as a result no one noticed' and *entraron silenciosamente de manera que nadie se diera/diese cuenta* 'they entered quietly so that no one would notice' (intention). See 20.4.5 for more details.

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* '(s)he shouted in such a way that all the neighbours leaned out of their windows'.

Conque and *así que* indicate results: *conque ha sido ella* 'so it was her', *así que no he vuelto* 'so/as a result I haven't gone back'.

37.10 Subordinating conjunctions of time

These include such words and phrases as:

a la vez que at the same time as
a partir del momento en que from the time that
a poco de que shortly after
al mismo tiempo que at the same time as
al poco rato de que shortly after
antes de que before
apenas scarcely/as soon as
así que as soon as
cada vez que every time that
cuando when
después de que after
en cuanto as soon as
hasta que until
mientras while
nada más que as soon as
no bien (*que*) as soon as
siempre que whenever
tan pronto como as soon as
una vez que once/as soon as

All subordinators of time require the subjunctive in certain circumstances (*antes de que* always takes the subjunctive). They are discussed at 20.4.7.

37.11 Discourse markers

Discourse markers are words like 'well', 'in that case', 'by the way', used to link what has been said to what is about to be said. The colloquial variants listed below reflect European usage and the list is not exhaustive.

37.11.1 Afterthoughts: 'by the way'

The standard ways of introducing an afterthought or some apparently digressive remark are a *propósito* and *por cierto*, which both mean 'by the way'/'incidentally': *a propósito/por cierto vi a tu madre ayer* 'by the way/incidentally, I saw your mother yesterday'. *Por cierto* is slightly more colloquial than a *propósito* and it does not mean 'for certain'. *A propósito* can also mean *adrede* 'on purpose': *lo rompiste a propósito* 'you broke it on purpose'.

A todo esto is another, colloquial, equivalent of 'incidentally'.

37.11.2 Additions: 'moreover', 'apart from that'

There are several opening phrases that indicate the speaker's intention of adding – or not adding – new information:

Es más, también se lo dije a su hermano	Moreover, I also told his brother
Además, mi mujer era mecanógrafa (GCI, Cu., dialogue)	Moreover, my wife was a typist
Encima/Para colmo no nos han dado el contrato (*encima* here is colloquial)	On top of everything they haven't given us the contract
Por lo demás/Aparte de eso no tengo más que decirte	Apart from that, I haven't got anything else to tell you

37.11.3 Qualification, reservation: 'however', 'nevertheless', 'still . . . ', etc.

There are a number of ways of indicating that what has gone before is not a complete explanation of the facts or is not the whole truth:

(a) *Sin embargo* 'nevertheless'/'still . . .'/'however'/'in spite of that' occurs in speech and in writing. *No obstante* means the same thing, but is more literary. *Empero* also means 'nevertheless', but is highly literary, uncommon and typical of journalese:

Sin embargo a los extranjeros, y especialmente a los españoles, les gusta Montevideo (MB, Ur.)	Nevertheless foreigners, and especially Spaniards, like Montevideo
Sin embargo, cuando se le acababa el vermut iba corriendo a comprar otra botella (ES, Mex., dialogue)	However, when her vermouth finished she used to rush off to buy another bottle
Empero, si para llegar a Marte tardamos 24 meses terrestres . . . (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	However, if it takes us 24 earth months to get to Mars . . .

(1) Colloquially *mira que* can express the idea of 'nevertheless': *las asistentas siempre se me van, y mira que las trato bien* 'my home-helps always walk out on me, despite the fact that I always treat them well'. The phrase is quite strong: 'but I'm telling you' or 'and mind you . . .' might be better translations.

(2) A colloquial way of saying 'however' is *pero, bueno . . .*: *no tenemos mucho dinero, pero, bueno, tenemos que pagar nuestras deudas* 'we don't have a lot of money, but still, we have to pay our debts'.

37.11.4 Dismissing or downgrading information: 'anyway', 'all the same . . . '

Words meaning 'anyway' indicate that the speaker has chosen to disregard some aspect of the previous information. They express some variant on the theme 'it doesn't matter . . .'/'never mind . . .'.

Phrases like *de todas formas/maneras*, *sea como sea*, are usual in all styles; *sea como fuere* is literary: *de todos modos/de todas formas, llámame mañana* 'anyway, call me tomorrow'.

(1) *Nada*, sometimes combined with *bueno*, is also much used in spoken European Spanish to discount information previously received: *—Es que nunca está aquí los viernes—.* (*Bueno,*) *nada, volveré el lunes* '"(S)he's never here on Fridays." "Never mind, I'll come back on Monday"'. See the next section for *bueno.*

37.11.5 *Bueno*

In colloquial language the word *bueno* has many uses as an opener, i.e. as a way of starting a message of some kind. Its exact meaning depends a great deal on intonation.

(a) It may express disbelief or disagreement when combined with a sceptical intonation, e.g. 'that's as may be, but . . .': *—Es que no pude venir a clase ayer porque tenía gripe—. Bueno, te has recuperado rápidamente . . .* '"I couldn't come to class yesterday because I had the flu."' '"Well, you got over it quickly . . ."', *—Había cientos de personas en la fiesta—. Bueno, no tantas . . .* 'there were hundreds of people at the party'. 'Well, not that many . . .', *—¿A las cuatro y media, entonces? —Bueno,*

la verdad es que si pudiera ser a las cuatro, mucho mejor (LS, Sp., dialogue) '"Four thirty then?" "Well, the truth is, if it could be at four o'clock it'd be a lot better."'

(b) It may make the previous information less important, in which case it means something like a modest 'anyway': *yo digo que todos los días deberían ser diez de mayo, ¿no? Bueno, esa es mi opinión muy personal* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'I say that every day should be the tenth of May, don't you? Anyway, that's my very own personal opinion' (10 May is Mother's Day in Mexico).

(c) *Bueno*, without a sceptical intonation, is much used in spoken, but not written Spanish, to show that the speaker has taken previous remarks or circumstances into account before continuing. Its rough equivalent is 'right . . .'/'OK . . .'/'fine . . .': *bueno, yo no sabía todo eso, y si las cosas están así, tenemos que pensar . . .* 'right/OK/fine, I didn't know all that, and if that's the way things are, we have to think . . .', —*Bueno, ¿qué te parece si vamos al grano?* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'Right/OK, how about getting to the point?'

37.11.6 Resumption: 'as a result', 'so . . .'

The effect of these words is to carry on or draw a conclusion from what has previously been said.

(a) The most common are *de modo que*, *de manera que*, *de forma que*, *así que*, *conque* (colloquial), *o sea que* (colloquial). They all mean 'so' in the sense of 'carrying on from what I just said', 'as a result' or 'in other words' (especially the colloquial *o sea que*):

De modo/forma/manera que, como íbamos diciendo . . .	So, as we were saying . . .
De forma que lo extraordinario se ha convertido en ordinario (MFÁ, Sp.)	So the extraordinary has become ordinary
Así que/O sea que, en lugar de dejarlo allí, te lo llevaste	So/In other words, instead of leaving it there, you took it with you
Conque lo que pasó fue eso . . .	So *that* was what happened . . .
—*¿Conque libros de Che?* (EP. Mex., dialogue. Accusing or challenging tone)	What's this?! Books by Che Guevara?!

37.11.7 Emphasis and insistence: 'really', 'actually', 'the fact is . . .'

There are various ways of driving home a point.

(a) *En realidad*, *realmente* are like the English 'really' or 'actually': they indicate that the speaker is about to reveal the 'true' facts: *en realidad/realmente este tipo de argumento no viene al caso* 'in fact/in reality/to tell the truth, this type of argument is irrelevant', *desaparecieron del alhajero de mi madre. En realidad nunca se usaron* (GZ, Mex., dialogue) 'they vanished from my mother's jewellery/US jewelry box. Actually, they were never used'.

(b) *De hecho* means 'the fact is': *de hecho es como si fuera mi padre* 'in fact it's just as if he were my father', *de hecho, el país dependía de la autoridad carismática de un hombre de setenta y ocho años* (MSQ, Arg.) 'the fact is that the country was depending on the charismatic authority of a seventy-eight year old man'.

(c) *Ahora bien* is, like the English 'now', used to insist on the following statement as something that may not yet have been fully taken into account. It is used more than its English equivalent: *ahora bien, hay que insistir en que los ejércitos de la Monarquía Católica estaban integrados por soldados de muy diversas nacionalidades* (MFA, Sp.) 'now, it must be stressed that the armies of the Catholic Monarchy consisted of soldiers of widely differing nationalities'.

(d) Colloquially, Spanish makes much use of the formula *es que . . .* which conveys the idea of 'the fact is . . .' but is used mainly when offering explanations: —*Te llamé pero no contestaste*—. *Es que/El hecho es que no dormí en casa* '"I called you but I couldn't get an answer." "The fact is/The thing is that I didn't sleep at home"', *es que pocas veces los veo tan temprano* (EM, Mex., dialogue) 'actually I don't often see you (plural) this early'.

37.11.8 Summing up

There are several ways of summarizing the previous information.

(a) *En resumen* and *en suma* are literary phrases meaning 'in short'/'to sum up . . .':

En suma, todo cuanto pueda hacerle ganar en prestigio lo cuidará al máximo (MFA, Sp.)	In short, he'll be extremely careful about anything that can make him gain prestige
En resumen, las cifras de este año son marcadamente superiores a las del año pasado	To sum up, this year's figures are markedly higher than last year's

(b) *Total* can be thought of as a colloquial equivalent of *en resumen*. It indicates that the speaker has decided to get to the point. English often uses a slightly impatient 'anyway' in a similar way: *total, se levanta y se va* 'to cut a long story short/anyway (s)he gets up and walks out', *total, has metido la pata* 'in a word, you've put your foot in it', *total, ella confía en que será buenísima* (AM, Mex., dialogue) 'anyway, she's confident that she'll be really good'.

(c) *En fin* is constantly used, but its meaning is, like *total*, rather indefinable. It means 'well' when this introduces a conclusion arrived at after a certain amount of thought. There are several English possibilities:

En fin, a mí me sigue pareciendo que es como si Sherlock Holmes resolviera sus casos acudiendo a la Interpol (JAM, Sp., dialogue)	Well, it still seems to me like Sherlock Holmes solving his cases by calling in Interpol
En fin, lo que me estás diciendo es que no has perdido el dinero sino que te lo has gastado	OK/Right, what you're telling me is that you haven't lost the money but you've spent it
Pero en fin, los padres de uno son los padres de uno (JJB, Mex., dialogue)	But, after all, one's parents are one's parents

37.11.9 Contradiction: 'on the contrary', 'no way . . .'

These words show that the speaker does not agree with the previous information:

(a) *Por el contrario*, *al contrario*, *en absoluto* are standard equivalents of 'on the contrary'. *Por el contrario* is normal in written language: —*¿Te encuentras mal? —Por el contrario/Al contrario/En absoluto, estoy estupendamente* '"Are you feeling sick/ill?" "On the contrary, I feel great"'.

(b) *Qué va* is a colloquial phrase expressing strong disagreement: —*Es que es riquísima*—. *Qué va, no tiene donde caerse muerta* '"She's really rich." "No way! She hasn't got a cent"' (lit. 'she hasn't got anywhere to drop dead').

(c) *De ninguna manera* expresses strong refusal, and is common in all styles. *De eso nada* is a colloquial phrase that conveys the same idea: —*¿Puedo pagarte a plazos? —De ninguna manera/De eso nada* '"Can I pay you by instalments?" "Certainly not/no way."'

(d) *Oye* (*oiga* to a stranger or person held in special respect) is commonly used colloquially, above all in Spain, to reject an implication: *oye, si ya lo he pagado* '(I'm telling you) I've already paid'. It is constantly put at the end of statements in familiar speech (at least in Spain), (*si*) *ya lo he pagado, oye*, but some informants said this sounds 'common'.

¡Oye! (or, respectfully, *¡oiga!*) can also be used to call someone's attention, and it is not rude if the intonation is friendly, at least in Spain; but it may sound abrupt to Latin Americans, cf. *oiga joven, ¿sería tan amable de traerme una Superior si no es mucha molestia?* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'listen, young man, would you mind bringing me a *Superior* [beer] if it isn't too much trouble?'

(e) The word *si*, which usually means 'if', is much used on both continents to disapprove of or express surprise at previous information (see also 35.4.8): *—Te tienes que levantar—. ¡Si sólo son las cinco y media!* '"You've got to get up." "It's only five-thirty, for heaven's sake!"'

(f) *Tampoco* is often used colloquially to play down certain types of statement, as in *tampoco es para tanto* 'come on, it's not such a big deal'. See 27.5.10.

(g) The words *ca* or *quia* used to be used, in Spain until the late 1940s, to mean 'certainly not'. They now seem to be extinct.

37.11.10 Contrast: 'on the other hand'

Various words and phrases imply contrast, like the English 'on the other hand'.

Por otra parte is one equivalent of 'on the other hand': *por otra parte es posible pensar que tiene razón* 'on the other hand, it's possible to think that (s)he's right'.

En cambio/Por el contrario can have a similar meaning but are more often used to express difference or contrast: *ella lo/le adora, en cambio/sin embargo/por el contrario, él no lo/le puede ver* 'she adores him; on the other hand/however, he can't stand him', *en cambio, cabe suponer que nunca hubo vida en Marte* 'on the other hand, there is room to suppose that life never existed on Mars'.

37.11.11 Consequence and result: 'as a result'

These words and phrases show that what follows is the result of what preceded.

(**a**) *Por* (*lo*) *tanto*, *por lo consiguiente*, *en/como consecuencia* all mean 'as a result' and are all typical of formal styles: *por lo tanto, estamos ante otro instrumento de la Monarquía de los Austrias* (MFA, Sp.) 'here we have, therefore, another of the tools used by the (royal house of the) Austrias', *por lo consiguiente si en la Ciudad de México se redujera la polución, las visitas a los nosocomios disminuirían en mil 517 al año* (*La Jornada*, Mex. *Nosocomio*, a Latin-American word for 'hospital'. *La contaminación* is used for 'pollution' in Spain) 'as a result, if pollution in Mexico City were reduced, hospital visits would drop by 1,517 a year'.

(**b**) *Por ende* 'hence' is archaic, but is occasionally resurrected for stylistic effect. It could have replaced *por consiguiente* in the previous example, but the result would have sounded pompous.

(c) *De modo que*, *de forma que*, *así que*, *con que*, can all also mean 'hence', 'as a result'. They are discussed above at 37.11.6.

(d) *Por eso . . .* 'that's why . . .' is much used in everyday language in all styles: *por eso las generalizaciones no sólo son absurdas y peligrosas, sino indefectiblemente inexactas* (JM, Sp.) 'that's why generalizations are not only absurd and dangerous, they are also inevitably inaccurate'. *Por esta razón* 'that's why' has the same meaning.

(e) *Entonces*, as well as meaning 'then' in the sense of 'just after', is much used to introduce a conclusion: *¿te gusto entonces?* (GCI, Cu., dialogue) 'do you like me then?', *entonces ¿estamos de acuerdo*? 'so, are we in agreement?'. See 35.7.4 for a comparison with *luego*.

(f) *Pues* is discussed elsewhere, and it can mean 'because' in literary language; see 37.5.3. It is constantly used in colloquial language to introduce conclusions: *—No me gusta la forma—. Pues cámbialo* '"I don't like the shape." "Then change it"', *pues eso mismo te iba a decir* 'well, that's just what I was going to tell you'.

37.11.12 Agreement

There are numerous ways of agreeing with the previous information or of asserting something as self-evident.

(a) *De acuerdo* means 'I agree', 'agreed', and expresses consent to some decision or request. *Ya* (see **e**), *bien*, and, in Spain, *vale* are much used for the same purpose: *—Tú quédate aquí mientras yo voy* (*a*) *por el coche—. De acuerdo/Ya/Vale/Bien* '"You stay here while I fetch the car." 'Ok/Fine/Agreed."'

(b) *Claro* means 'of course' and is found in all styles, although it is slightly colloquial: *claro, como no me avisaste con tiempo, no pude ir* 'of course, you didn't warn me in time, I couldn't go', *claro que si no quieres venir, no vengas* 'obviously if you don't want to come, don't come'. Sometimes it makes *sí* 'yes' unnecessary: *—¿Puedo pasar unos días en tu casa? —Hombre, claro, cuando quieras* '"can I stay a few days at your house?" "Yes, of course, any time you want"' (*hombre* can be said to a man or woman).

(c) *Desde luego* means 'of course': *desde luego, si quieres entrar tendrás que pagar* 'obviously, if you want to go in you'll have to pay'.

(d) *En efecto* and *efectivamente* both acknowledge the truth of what has occurred or has been said: *en efecto/efectivamente todos estaban de acuerdo conmigo* 'they were indeed all in agreement with me'. *—Bueno, estamos fastidiados—. Efectivamente/En efecto* '"Well, we've had it/we're in trouble." "You're right."'

(e) *Ya* has many uses, listed at 35.7.1. It is often used to indicate agreement with the previous statement, although spoken sarcastically it can mean the exact opposite: *—Es que hay que darle un nombre al fichero antes de guardarlo—. Ya* '"You have to give the file a name before saving it." "Right/OK/I see"', *—Es que soy más listo que tú—. Ya, ya . . .*'"I'm smarter than you." "Yeah, sure . . ."'.

(f) *De verdad* insists on the truth of a statement, rather like *en serio* 'seriously': *de verdad te digo que estoy loca por él* 'I'm telling you, I'm really mad about him'. *A decir verdad* 'to tell the truth . . .' has a similar meaning.

38 Prepositions

In this chapter prepositions – equivalents of words like 'above', 'at', 'behind', 'in', 'on', 'to', 'without', etc. – are treated in alphabetical order and special emphasis has been given to aspects of Spanish usage likely to be unfamiliar to English speakers. The following prepositions are discussed:

a to, at 38.2	***de*** of, from 38.8	***hasta*** until, as far 38.14	***sobre*** over, on, about 38.20
ante, ***delante de*** in front of, faced with 38.3	***desde*** from 38.9	***mediante*** by means of 38.15	***tras***, ***detrás de*** after, behind, 38.21 *versus* 38.22
bajo, ***debajo de*** beneath, underneath 38.4	***durante*** during 38.10	***para*** for. 38.16	
cabe (archaic) next to 38.5	***en*** in, on, at 38.11	***por*** 38.17	
		prepositional phrases 38.23	
con with 38.6	***entre*** between, among 38.12	***según*** according to 38.18	
contra against 38.7	***hacia*** towards 38.13	***sin*** without 38.19	

Most of these can be combined with other words to form prepositional phrases such as *frente a* 'opposite', *a razón de* 'at the rate of', etc.

38.1 Spanish prepositions: general remarks

38.1.1 They appear only before nouns and noun phrases

Important: Spanish prepositions can only appear before nouns and noun phrases (nouns, adjectives plus nouns, pronouns, infinitives: *en la casa*, *con muchos amigos*, *sin ella*, *para la que . . .*, *de fumar*, etc.). This makes English sentences like 'which shop/store did you buy that in?' impossible in Spanish because the preposition 'in' stands before nothing: *¿en qué tienda compraste eso?*, never ***¿qué tienda compraste eso en?*

Some grammarians dislike sentences like ?*la cerámica es hecha por y para los mismos habitantes del pueblo* 'the pottery is made by and for the villagers themselves', since *por* stands before a conjunction, *y*: They prefer *. . . es hecha por los habitantes del pueblo y para ellos mismos.* Similarly, 'I'll go with or without you' is *iré contigo o sin ti*, not **iré con o sin ti.* However, *con y sin . . .* is found: *apartamentos con y sin calefacción central* 'apartments with and without central heating'. There are other common exceptions, mentioned at 38.1.2. The Academy, *NGLE* 31.4c, accepts *por y para* and *con y sin* but notes that this construction is rare and usually doubtful with other prepositions.

38.1.2 Prepositions should not be omitted

Omission of prepositions should be avoided: **personas acusadas de pertenecer y colaborar con el movimiento terrorista* *'persons accused of belonging and collaborating with the terrorist movement' sounds bad in both languages: *. . . acusadas de pertenecer* ***al*** *movimiento terrorista y de colaborar* ***con*** *él* is correct, *. . . pertenecer a y colaborar con el movimiento terrorista* may offend purists because the *a* is not followed by a noun phrase.

However, *entraban y salían del edificio* 'they entered and left the building' is nowadays heard, and no one would say **un billete de ida a Granada y de vuelta de ella* for *un billete de ida y vuelta a Granada* 'a round trip to Granada'/'a return ticket to Granada'.

38.1.3 English prepositions are sometimes untranslatable

English is very precise about location and direction; Spanish is often quite vague. The subtle differences between colloquial English prepositions of space, as in 'I'm going to/across to/round to/down to/up to/over to the supermarket' are virtually untranslatable: *voy al supermercado*.

38.1.4 'The book on the table', 'the house on the hill'

Important: English constantly joins nouns by prepositions as a way of avoiding relative clauses: '*the plane to New York* has arrived' is short for 'the plane (that is) going to New York has arrived', 'I've read *the book on the table*' = 'I've read the book that's on the table'.

English speakers therefore write and say things like ?*el avión a Nueva York ha llegado*, ?*he leído el libro en la mesa*, but this often makes bad Spanish unless there is a word that supports the preposition, as in ***iba** en el tren **a** Madrid* 'I was travelling on the train to Madrid', ***puse** el libro **en** la mesa* 'I put the book on the table'. ?*Leí el libro en la mesa* sounds like 'I was on the table when I read the book'.

There is no room for a lengthy discussion of this topic, but the best rule for beginners is: when an English phrase consisting of a noun + preposition + noun could be expressed by a relative clause, use a relative clause in Spanish unless the preposition is *de*:

Good Spanish	**Compressed English equivalent**
La casa que está en la colina es de mi madre (or *la casa **de** la colina es . . .*)	The house on the hill is my mother's
El avión que va a Lima ha salido ya (or *el avión para Lima . . .*)	The plane to Lima has already left
Los hombres de Ruritania son muy guapos	The men in Ruritania are very good-looking
El perro que está en el jardín es del vecino	The dog in the garden is the neighbour's
*la chica **del** tren/el hombre **de** negro*	the girl on the train/the man in black
*El hombre **del** Ford azul es mi tío*	The man with the blue Ford is my uncle

These are much better Spanish than ?*la casa en la colina . . .*, ?*el avión a Lima . . .*, *los hombres en Ruritania . . .*, **la chica en el tren*, ?*el perro en el jardín . . ..*, while **el hombre en negro* is not Spanish. However, if the preposition is connected to a verb the construction may be normal: *vi a la chica en el tren* 'I saw the girl in the train', *construyeron la casa en la colina* 'they built the house on the hill'. A noun can support a preposition, as in *una expedición a Marte* 'an expedition to Mars' ('expedition' implies motion), but not ?*una nave especial a Marte* 'a spaceship to Mars', where the noun does not itself imply motion.

If the preposition does not indicate the place where something is *located*, the construction is often correct: *un café con leche*, *la gasolina sin plomo* 'unleaded petrol/US gas', *los pasajeros sin billete* 'passengers without tickets'. Further remarks are included under the individual prepositions discussed in this chapter.

38.2 *A*

This very common preposition has many uses. Apart from the problems they have with personal *a* (discussed in Chapter 26), English speakers tend to misuse it when translating phrases like 'at the dentist's', 'at Cambridge', 'at the bus stop'. See 38.2.2 for discussion.

38.2.1 Motion, to, at, up, down, etc.

Almost any verb or noun indicating motion is likely to be followed by *a*. As a result, its meaning includes 'on', 'into', 'in', 'onto', 'down', 'up', as well as 'to' and 'at':

Fui al dentista	I went to the dentist
Llegaron a Managua	They arrived in Managua
Me subí al coche/al tren	I got into the car/train
El gato se subió a un árbol	The cat climbed up a tree
Lo pegó al/en el sobre	(S)he stuck it on the envelope
Cuélgaselo al cuello	Hang it round his/her neck
(cf. *Cuélgalo **en** la pared*)	(Hang it on the wall)
Cayó al suelo/al mar	It fell onto the ground, into the sea
una expedición a Marte/un viaje a la Luna	an expedition to Mars/a journey to the Moon

(1) *A* is omitted after verbs of motion before *aquí*, *acá*, *ahí*, *allí*, *allá*: *ven aquí/ven acá/ven para acá* 'come here', *allá voy/voy para allá* 'I'm going there'.

(2) Spain *entrar en el cuarto*, Latin America *entró **al** cuarto* '(s)he entered the room', the latter sometimes heard also in Spain. The nouns *entrada* and *salida* take *a*: *entrada a la galería* 'entrance to the gallery', *salida a la calle* 'exit to the street'. Spain also prefers *en* with *penetrar* 'penetrate', *ingresar* 'to join (club, etc.)', *introducir* 'to insert', but *a* is common in Latin America, cf. *ingresa como adepto laico a la orden* (JLB, Arg.) 'he enters (historic present) the order as a lay follower'.

(3) Important: as stated earlier, *a* should not be used to join nouns when motion is implied: *el tren que va a Madrid*, not ?*el tren a Madrid* (see 38.1.4), unless the noun or a verb implies motion, as in *un viaje a África* 'a journey to Africa', *vuelos a La Paz* 'flights to La Paz', *íbamos en el tren a Córdoba* 'we were going in the train to Cordoba'.

(4) Everyday spoken Mexican Spanish may use *con* instead of *a* after *ir* or *llevar* when a consultation is involved: *debe ir con el doctor, ¿Por qué no lo lleva con el médico de don Pedro Castro?* (EM, dialogue) 'he ought to see the doctor. Why don't you take him to Pedro Castro's doctor?' (Spain: *debe ir al médico . . . por qué no lo/le lleva a . . .*).

38.2.2 *A* compared with the English 'at'

A translates 'at' when motion or direction towards is involved:

Mira al suelo y no te entrará agua en los ojos	Look down at the floor and you won't get water in your eyes
Apunta a la bombilla	Aim at the light bulb

Important: when no motion is involved, the use of the preposition *a* to indicate 'at' or 'in' a place is limited in Spanish. English speakers – especially those who know French, German or Italian – must not use *a* in sentences like *estoy estudiando **en** la universidad de Cambridge* 'I'm studying *at* Cambridge University', *te esperaré **en** la estación* 'I'll wait for you *at* the station' (cf. *à la gare*, *am Bahnhof*, *alla stazione*, 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 *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*.

A is, however, used to translate 'at' in a number of static situations involving close proximity to an object, e.g. *a la barra* 'at the bar', *a la mesa* 'at table' – especially after *sentarse* 'to sit down': *fue a sentarse a una mesa del fondo* (GZ, Mex.) 'he went to sit down at a table at the back'. But *en* is very common: *acababa de instalarme en una mesa con vista al mar* (LS, Sp.) 'I'd just settled at a table with a view of the sea', *en una mesa apartada, Angélica y Alberto reconciliándose* (ES, Mex.) 'Angelica and Alberto at a secluded table making up (i.e. after a quarrel)'. More examples of 'static' *a*:

Vivo a la vuelta	I live round the corner
a orillas del mar	on the seashore
Oí pasos a mi espalda	I heard footsteps at my back
Se pasa horas sentada al ordenador	She spends hours sitting at the computer
Se arrodilló a los pies de la Virgen	(S)he knelt at the feet of the Virgin
Está con el agua al cuello	(S)he's up to her/his neck (in troubles: *hasta* implies real water)
a la izquierda/derecha de	to the left/right of (cf. *a diestra y siniestra* 'to right and left', i.e. 'on all sides')
Se sentaron al sol/a la luz/al calor del fuego/a la sombra/al amparo de un roble	They sat in the sun/light/warmth of the fire/shade/in the shelter of an oak

But note:

Espérame ***en*** *la parada del autobús*	Wait for me at the bus stop
Se detuvo ***en*** *el primer semáforo* (MS, Mex.)	He stopped at the first traffic lights
Mario está en el banco	Mario is at/in the bank
Los niños están en el colegio (cf. *mi hijo todavía no va* ***al*** *colegio*)	The children are in/at school (my son isn't at school yet)
. . . para que el coche no estuviera tanto tiempo estacionado en la puerta (GGM, Col. Refers to a horse-drawn carriage)	. . . so the carriage wouldn't be parked so long at the door

(1) *A la puerta* is also good Spanish for 'at the door': *Morelli habla del napolitano que se pasó años sentado a la puerta de su casa* (JC, Arg.) 'Morelli speaks of the man from Naples who spent years sitting at the door of his house'; but we found that some Latin Americans preferred *en*, as in *al entrar . . . se detuvo en la puerta* (GZ, Mex.) 'as he entered . . . he paused at the door'.

(2) Spanish therefore has no prepositions that can differentiate 'he's at the hospital' (e.g. visiting) and 'he's in (the) hospital' (i.e. hospitalized). Context may make the meaning clear or verbs can be used instead: *ha ido al hospital* and *está internado* (i.e. 'hospitalized').

(3) 38.2.10 lists some other phrases in which *a* is used to join two nouns.

(4) Spanish differentiates *mirar a* 'to look towards/in the direction of' and *mirar* 'to look at', cf. *mira este cuadro con detenimiento* 'look at this painting attentively' and *mira a la derecha/a la izquierda* 'look to the right/to the left'.

38.2.3 *A* in adverbial phrases of manner

Adverbial phrases of manner with *a* are numerous:

a pie/a mano/a lápiz	on foot/by hand/in pencil
a golpes/a tiros/a patadas	with blows/by shooting/with kicks
Pedía socorro a gritos	(S)he/I was shouting for help
un documento escrito a máquina	a typed document
Las patatas están a punto (Lat. Am. *las papas*)	The potatoes are done
El servicio queda a voluntad del cliente	The service charge is at the customer's discretion

and many others which will be found in good dictionaries.

(1) The construction with *a* found in *sois dos a ganar* 'there are two of you earning', *ahora son cuatro a dormir* (JC, Sp., dialogue) 'there are four of them sleeping there now', may perhaps be included under this heading.

38.2.4 *A* in time phrases

a las diez/a medianoche	at 10 o'clock/at midnight
Se cansa a los cinco minutos	(S)he gets tired after five minutes
Bonos del Estado a diez años	ten-year Government Bonds
Se casaron a los/con veinte años	They got married at the age of twenty
Estamos a miércoles/a quince	It's Wednesday/the fifteenth
tres veces al/por día	three times a day
A su muerte se dividió el reino en tres partes	at his death the kingdom was divided into three parts

(1) *A* is particularly common in the construction *al* + infinitive, e.g. *al ver* 'on seeing', *al volverse* 'as (s)he turned round/back'. See 22.3.3.

(2) *A* is also used to indicate a stage in some process, as in *a la segunda taza no parece ya tan malo* (ET, Sp.) 'it doesn't seem so bad when you get to the second cup', *a la tercera llamada del teléfono* 'on the third ring of the phone'.

(3) Note the construction *ya deben estar al llegar* 'they must be about to arrive', or *están a punto de llegar.*

38.2.5 *A* translates 'of' or 'like' after verbs meaning 'smell', 'taste', 'sound' and 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

and similarly after *oler a* 'to smell of' – *huele a quemado* 'there's a smell of burning' – *apestar a* 'to stink of'. Also *quiero ese rosado que viene con sabor a cereza* (LR, Col., dialogue) 'I want that rosé wine that comes with a cherry flavour', *. . . un olor a marihuana mezclada con lavanda y pólvora* (ES, Mex.) 'a smell of marihuana mixed with lavender and gunpowder'.

38.2.6 *A* = 'fitted with', 'propelled by', 'running on'

Some grammarians, and the Academy's DPD, criticize *a* as a borrowing from French in some of the following constructions, but most are normal in everyday language:

olla a presión/caldera a/de gas-oil	pressure cooker/oil-fired boiler
la televisión a colores, qué regalazo de bodas (ES, Mex., dialogue. Spain *televisión en color*)	colour TV, what a fantastic wedding present
un avión a/de dos motores	a twin-engine plane
un pantalón a rayas (or *de rayas*)	striped trousers/US pants

(1) The Academy's recommended construction, *olla de presión*, *avión de reacción* 'jet plane', is more common in Latin America. The use of *a* before ingredients is occasionally seen in advertising language but it should not be imitated: *crema bronceadora a lanolina* 'suntan cream with lanolin', better and more usually nowadays *con lanolina*.

A is much used in the names of dishes, as in *pollo a la cerveza* 'chicken in beer', *chuletas de cerdo al ajillo* 'pork chops with chopped garlic'.

38.2.7 *A* used to indicate rate, measure, speed, amount, distance, time

a cuatrocientos pesos el metro	at 400 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
cambiar a razón de dos por uno	to change at the rate of two for one
Está a cinco manzanas (Lat. Am. *cinco cuadras*)	It's five blocks away
a montones	in heaps
Trabaja a ratos/a veces	(S)he works now and again/sometimes

(1) The construction *a la tarde*, *a la noche* for *por la tarde*, *por la noche* is normal in Argentina and neighbouring countries. Other Latin-American countries may use *en la tarde*, *en la noche*.

38.2.8 *A* after verbs meaning 'begin', 'start', 'get ready to . . .'

Rompió a llorar/echó a correr '(s)he burst into tears'/'(s)he broke into a run', *el cielo empezaba a despejarse* 'the sky was beginning to clear', and after *comenzar a* 'to begin', *ponerse a* 'to start to', *prepararse a* 'to get ready to', *disponerse a* 'to prepare oneself to', *meterse a* 'to take up . . .', as in *no te metas a psicoterapeuta con él, porque solamente complicarás las cosas* 'don't get into being a psychotherapist with him, because you'll only complicate things'.

38.2.9 A used after other verbs, adjectives and adverbs

A is used after many other verbs, adjectives and adverbs, which must be learned separately:

Se aferraba al árbol/a una idea	(S)he clung to the tree/an idea
Aspiraba a hacerse médico	He was aiming to become a doctor
Acostumbraban (*a*) *hacerlo*	They habitually did it
Tienes que hacerte al trabajo	You have to get used to the work
Prefiero una vida mediocre a ser héroe	I prefer a mediocre life to being a hero
Me pude salvar agarrándome a/de un árbol	I managed to save myself by clinging to a tree
No hay otro igual a él	There is no other equal to him
Tenía el jersey liado en torno a la cintura	(S)he had his/her jersey tied round his/her waist
Tendían emboscadas al enemigo	They were laying ambushes for the enemy

El viejo argumento de que la religión sirve de freno a los instintos	The old argument that religion serves as a curb on the instincts
adicto a los videojuegos	addicted to computer games
un aficionado a la informática	computer hobbyist

and with other verbs, some listed at 26.11.

38.2.10 *A* to link two nouns

el amor a la patria	love for one's home country
el respeto a la autoridad	respect for authority
Insinué algo en el prólogo al libro de Lafaye . . . (OP, Mex., *del* possible)	I hinted something in the prologue to Lafaye's book . . .
—¿Tiene usted miedo a volar? —Lo soporto (JV, Mex., dialogue)	'Are you scared of flying?' 'I can cope with it'
El culto al sol tendría sus ventajas	Sun-worship would have its advantages

(1) With words like *miedo* 'fear' or *amor* 'love' one can use either *a* or *de* if no ambiguity arises, cf. *así que tiene miedo de las cucarachas* (CMG, Sp., dialogue; or *a*) 'so you're afraid of cockroaches . . .'.

(2) In some phrases *a* can remove the ambiguity of *de*: compare *el amor de Dios* = 'God's love' or 'love of God' and *el amor a Dios* = only 'love for God'. Often either preposition is possible:

38.2.11 *A* before indirect objects

A translates 'to' after verbs meaning 'give', 'send', 'say', 'rob, take away', 'buy from', etc.

Le di mil euros a mi hijo	I gave 1,000 euros to my son
Le dije la verdad a la policía	I told the truth to the police
Me envió una carta a mí	(S)he sent me a letter
Le robaron una sortija a mi tía	They stole a ring from my aunt
Le compró un coche a su vecino	(S)he bought a car from his/her neighbour
una banda de traficantes de drogas, a los que aprehendieron trece kilos de cocaína (*La Vanguardia*, Sp.)	a gang of drug-dealers from whom they confiscated 13 kilos of cocaine
Eso se lo oíste a tu padre	You heard that from your father

(1) Important: As we have said before, English-speaking learners must remember that in Spanish indirect objects can lose as well as gain, so *a* translates 'from' after a number of words with such meanings as 'steal', 'confiscate', 'buy', and after *oír* 'to hear', and similarly after *quitar* 'take away', *sustraer* 'steal', *confiscar* 'confiscate', *llevarse* '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'.

38.2.12 *A* is used before certain types of direct object (personal *a*)

This is a special feature of Spanish not found in most other Romance languages, e.g. *vi al gitano* 'I saw the gypsy', *reconocí a Manuel* 'I recognized Manuel'. See Chapter 26 for a detailed discussion.

38.3 *Ante* and *delante de*

Delante de means 'in front of': *se puso delante de mí* '(s)he stood in front of me'. *Ante* can mean the same in written, but rarely in spoken, Spanish: *me eché en la cama ante la televisión* (JM, Sp.) 'I lay down on the bed in front of the television'. *Ante* is, however, 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). Examples:

Tuvo que comparecer ante el tribunal	(S)he had to appear before the court
. . . ante esto, se exhorta a la población a . . . (*Excélsior*, Mex.)	. . . faced with/in view of this [air pollution] the public is encouraged to . . .
Ellas presumían de parienta famosa ante las otras viejas (MT, Sp.)	They boasted to the other older women of having famous female relatives
ante este dilema/insulto/problema	faced with this dilemma/insult/problem
Ante todo, quisiera agradecer al organizador	Above all, I'd like to thank the organizer
México ante la Naciones Unidas . . .	Mexico's position in the United Nations . . .

(1) *Delante de* shows that physical location rather than figurative presence is implied, cf. *justificarse ante Dios* 'to justify oneself before God', but *arrodillarse delante de la Virgen* 'to kneel before (a statue of) the Virgin'. For more about *delante de*, see 35.6.8.

(2) *Frente a* for *ante* in phrases like *frente a estos problemas* 'faced with these problems' is widespread: *una acción . . . de las Fuerzas Armadas frente a la subversión* (MSQ, Arg.) 'action by the Armed Forces in the face of subversion'.

(3) *Ante* and *delante de* should not be used to join nouns, as explained at 38.1.4: *el coche que está delante de la casa es mío*, not **el coche delante de la casa es mío* 'the car outside the house is mine'.

38.4 *Bajo, debajo de* and *so*

Bajo means 'beneath' or 'under'. It may be a literary variant of *debajo de* 'underneath' (also discussed at 35.6.6), but in this sense it is spatially less specific, like 'under' compared with 'underneath': *bajo una masa de nubes* 'beneath/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', *un estudiante con una pila de libros bajo el brazo* (CF, Mex.) 'a student with a pile of books under his arm'; but *enterró el botín debajo de un roble* '(s)he buried the loot under(neath) an oak tree'. ?*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'.

Important: *bajo* and not *debajo de* 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', *funciona bajo Windows 10* 'it works under Windows 10', etc.

bajo las estrellas/la lluvia/	beneath the stars/in the rain
bajo tierra (or *debajo de la tierra*)	underground
bajo los efectos de la anestesia	under the effects of the anaesthetic
bajo la monarquía/la república/el socialismo	under the monarchy/republic/socialism

(1) *Abajo de* is often heard for *debajo de* in Latin America: see 35.6.6.

(2) *Bajo* often alternates with *desde* in the phrase like *desde/bajo este punto de vista* 'from this point of view'.

(3) *Bajo* and *debajo de* should not be used to join nouns, as explained at 38.1.4; but there are set phrases like *temperaturas bajo cero* 'sub-zero temperatures', *declaraciones bajo juramento* 'statements under oath'.

(4) The preposition *so* is now extinct in everyday speech. It used to mean *bajo* and it survives in the set legal phrase *so pena de*: *so pena de muerte* 'on pain of death', *so pena de una multa* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'on pain of a fine', *so pena de ser destituido* 'on pain of being removed from office'.

38.5 *Cabe*

An archaic or rustic equivalent of *junto a/cerca de* 'by/near', now effectively extinct.

38.6 *Con*

38.6.1 *Con* compared with 'with'

In many contexts *con* coincides with the English 'with':

Fui a la reunión con Niso	I went to the meeting with Niso
Llegaron dos policías con perros	Two policemen with dogs arrived
Yo no podía quitarlo con una llave normal	I couldn't get it off with a normal spanner/wrench
con lo enferma que está . . .	and with her being so ill . . .
té con miel/café con leche	tea with honey/coffee with milk
Se levantó con el sol	(S)he got up with the sun
con la llegada del otoño	with the arrival of autumn

(1) Important: English speakers constantly misuse *con* to join nouns in phrases like *el chico* ***del*** *Mercedes azul* 'the boy with the blue Mercedes' (not **el chico con el Mercedes azul*), *el hombre* ***de*** *la cara fea y las manos hermosas era su marido* (CF, Mex.) 'the man with the ugly face and beautiful hands was her husband', *la astucia que caracterizaba al hombre de la corbatita de moño* (AJ, Mex. 'bow tie' = *la pajarita* in Spain) 'the cunning that was characteristic of the man with the bow tie'.

(2) Important: *con* cannot be used in combination with the nominalizer *el*: *el* ***de*** *la americana blanca* 'the one (masc.) with/in the white jacket', not **el con la americana blanca*'. Phrases like **la/el/los/las con paraguas/coches* for 'the one(s) with umbrellas/cars' are not Spanish: *el/la/los/las que tiene*(*n*) *paraguas/coche*, etc.

38.6.2 *Con* indicating attitude towards

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* 'her kindness is the same towards all'.

Es muy cariñoso con/para con su hijo (but not *. . . para su hijo*)	He's very affectionate towards his son
Era muy comprensiva con/para con sus pacientes	She was very understanding towards her patients
Era una estrategia comprensible y disculpable, y tampoco podía considerarla irrespetuosa para con mi inteligencia (LS, Sp., dialogue)	It was an understandable and excusable strategy and I couldn't consider that it lacked respect for my intelligence

Era buena y cariñosa con él y no le preguntaba nada de su pasado (MBD, Col.)	She was good and affectionate towards him and asked him nothing about his past
Es poco confiada con sus compañeros	She's not very trusting with his/her colleagues

Para con is most commonly used with positive emotions, but also occurs with words like *crueldad/obligaciones/deberes/compromiso* 'cruelty/obligations/duties/commitment towards'.

38.6.3 *Con* after words meaning 'meeting', 'colliding', 'facing up to', 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')
Tengo que vérmelas con el vecino	I'll have to have it out with the neighbour (i.e. have a frank talk with)
Iba en la moto y me di un golpe con/contra un poste	I was on my motorbike and I crashed into a post
Se enfrentaron con los guerrilleros/con el problema	They confronted the guerrillas/faced up to the problem
Contactó con/a su padre	(S)he contacted his/her father
Te paso con María	I'm handing the phone over to María

38.6.4 *Con* meaning 'containing'

It may – strangely to English speakers – mean 'containing':

Pensó que un vaso con agua le sabría mal . . . (GZ, Mex. Or *vaso de agua*)	He thought a glass of water would taste bad
Llevaba una cesta con pan, huevos, uvas y vino (*de* is not possible here)	(S)he was carrying a basket of bread, eggs, grapes and wine
una jeringa con morfina	a syringe of morphine

This use of *con* eliminates the ambiguity of *de*, which either means 'full of' or denotes the container and 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'.

38.6.5 *Con* meaning 'despite'

Con can mean 'despite' or some similar phrase (*a pesar de* is often an equivalent):

Con ser inteligente y rico nunca llegó a nada	Despite being intelligent and rich, he never came to anything
Con todo, la vida no es tan terrible	Despite everything, life isn't so terrible
Pero mi mamá, con todo y que ya pasa de los sesenta, sigue siendo una señora guapa, distinguida (ES, Mex., dialogue)	But my mother, despite everything and being over sixty, is still an attractive, distinguished lady

38.6.6 *Con* plus an infinitive

This may have a conditional sense:

Con hacer (or *haciendo*) *lo que yo os/les digo, todo irá bien*	Provided you (pl.) do what I say everything will go well
Solo/sólo con pulsar una tecla el ordenador almacena los datos	If you simply press a key the computer stores the data

A subjunctive may also follow *con* in this conditional meaning but *con que* must then be used: *con que pulses una tecla . . .* 'if you press a key . . .'. This must not be confused with the conjunction *conque* or with *con* plus a relative pronoun:

Con que me pagaran mis gastos me conformaría	I'd be happy if they paid my expenses
Bastó con que ella me hiciera reír (LR, Col.)	It was enough that she made me laugh

38.6.7 *Con* used to indicate cause or origin

Con may indicate the cause or origin of a condition:

Estamos muy entusiasmados/ilusionados con la perspectiva de un nuevo gobierno	We're very excited about the prospect of a new government
Se puso enferma con paludismo/malaria (or *enfermó de*, Lat. Am. *se enfermó de*)	She fell ill with/from malaria
Estoy en cama con gripe	I'm in bed with the flu
Se mareó con el vaivén del tren	(S)he felt nauseous because of the swaying of the train
Se alegró con/de la noticia del nacimiento de su nieto	(S)he cheered up at the news of his/her grandson's birth

(1) *Con* is used with *soñar* 'to dream', e.g. *soñar con algo/alguien*, 'to dream of something/someone'. Compare *pensar en algo/alguien* 'to think about something/someone' and *pensar de* as in *¿qué piensas del feminismo?* 'what do you think of feminism?'

38.6.8 Miscellaneous examples of *con*

Con is used in other 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* 'she died aged more than seventy', *usted fue el último que lo/le vio con vida* 'you were the last one to see him alive', *voy a verme con ella esta noche* 'I'm seeing her tonight', *. . . con lo mono que eres* (CF, Mex., dialogue) '. . . and you being so cute/handsome'.

38.7 *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:

una campaña contra/en contra de la corrupción	a campaign against corruption
Contra lo que creen algunos . . .	Despite/Contrary to what some believe . . .

Apoya tu pala contra el árbol	Lean/Prop your spade against the tree
Lanzó la piedra contra el árbol	(S)he threw the stone at the tree
inyectarse contra la gripe/la rabia (not **inyectarse para . . .*)	to get injected against flu/rabies
¿Está usted en contra de que lo hagan ellos?	Are you against them doing it?

(1) For *contra mí*, *en contra tuya*, etc. 'against me'/'against you' see note to 9.7.

(2) For the popular use of *contra* for *cuanto* in phrases like *cuanto más trabajas, más te dan* 'the more you work, the more they give you', see 6.11 note 1.

(3) *Contra* can join nouns if the meaning of the first noun invites its use, as in *la guerra contra la corrupción*. But not ?*la moto contra la pared es mía* 'the motorbike against the wall is mine': *la moto que está apoyada contra la pared . . .* 38.1.4.

38.8 *De*

38.8.1 'Of', 'belonging to'

This is one of the most common uses of *de*:

la matrícula del coche	the car number plate/US license plate
la moto de Felipe	Felipe's motorbike
el primero/uno de mayo	the first of May
¿De quién es esto?	Whose is this?

Speakers of French must resist the temptation to replace *de* by *a*: *c'est à vous? = ¿es de usted?/¿es suyo/suya?* 'is it yours?'

38.8.2 *De* used to make compound nouns

Note that *de* in such cases is not followed by a definite article:

un traje de baño	a swimsuit
un reloj de pulsera	a wristwatch
la estación de trabajo	the workstation
la tecla de desplazamiento	the scroll key

(1) This is the most frequent way of forming the equivalents of English compound nouns, but there are other methods, e.g. *un año luz* 'a light year', *un dispositivo USB* 'USB device', or *la pantalla táctil* 'touch screen'. These are mentioned at 2.1.9 and 5.11.

38.8.3 Origin (see 38.9 for the difference between *de* and *desde*)

Soy de México	I'm from Mexico
un ser de otro planeta	a being from another planet
un vino de solera	a vintage wine
un dolor de cabeza	a headache

(1) English speakers tend to use *en* to join nouns to indicate belonging to or originating from a place. Spanish prefers *de*: *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* 'the hills inland'. See 38.1.4 for details.

The temptation is strongest after a superlative: *este/éste es el mejor restaurante* ***de*** *Quito* 'this is the best restaurant in Quito', *el mejor momento de mi vida* 'the best moment in/of my life'. But Mexican Spanish often uses *en*: *el plan más ambicioso en el mundo* (Mexican TV) 'the most ambitious plan in the world', *el mejor surtido en México* 'the best range in Mexico' (advert.).

(2) *Viene de Toledo* normally only means '(s)he's coming from Toledo'; *es de Toledo* = '(s)he's from Toledo'.

38.8.4 *De* = 'made of', 'consisting of'

una estatua de oro macizo	a solid gold statue
una base de datos	a database
una impresora de inyección de tinta	an ink-jet printer
Este yogur es de leche de oveja	This is ewe's-milk yoghurt

38.8.5 *De* = 'about' in the sense of 'concerning'

De is much used for 'about' after verbs like *hablar*, *quejarse de*, *protestar de* (more usually *protestar por*) and after nouns like *carta* 'letter', *libro*, *poema*:

Se queja mucho del frío	(S)he complains a lot about the cold
¿Podría hablarnos de su experiencia allí? (JV, Mex., dialogue)	Could you tell us about your experience there?
Hablan mucho de ti (n.b. not *sobre ti*)	They're talking about you a lot
¿De qué va la cosa?	What's it all about?

(1) *De* as used here may imply something different from *sobre*: *una carta de amor* 'a love letter' is not a *una carta sobre el amor* 'a letter about love'. Compare *no quiero hablar de mis problemas personales* 'I don't want to talk about my personal problems' and *esta noche el terapeuta va a hablar sobre problemas personales* 'tonight the therapist is going to talk on the subject of "personal problems"'.

38.8.6 *De* = 'costing'

Las naranjas de dos euros son las mejores	The two-euro oranges are the best
Han comprado un coche de diez mil dólares	They've bought a 10,000 dollar car

38.8.7 Emotions arising from something

Tengo miedo del/al agua	I'm afraid of the water
Pero tenía miedo de que la policía lo viera (GZ, Mex.)	But he was scared the police would see him
el respeto de/a/por los derechos humanos	respect for human rights
Me da pena de él	I'm sorry for him
un fan de los videojuegos	a fan of computer games
la obsesión del/por/con el golf	the golf craze/the golf bug

And similarly *el horror de/a/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.

38.8.8 *De* used in certain adverbial phrases of manner:

Lo escribió de manera/modo que nadie pudiera/pudiese leerlo	(S)he wrote it in such a way that no one could read it
Le ha venido de perlas	It suited him/her perfectly
Solo/sólo he estado en Sevilla de paso	I've only been in Seville on the way through
Intentaron entrar de balde	They tried to get in free/without paying
Sale todos los sábados de juerga	(S)he goes out 'on the town' every Saturday
Estuvimos de bromas hasta las tres de la mañana	We were up until three telling jokes/ fooling around

38.8.9 *De* to describe a person's state or condition

This construction is closely related to the previous one:

De niña me gustaba mucho coser (MA, Cu., dialogue)	As a child I really used to like sewing
Trabajó dos meses de camarero	He worked as a waiter for two months
Tú aquí estás de más	You're not needed here
Vi a una criada de blanco paseando al niño	I saw a maid in white out walking the child
Salió vestida de pirata (ES, Mex., dialogue),	She appeared [on stage] dressed as a pirate
una chica joven de vaqueros y chaqueta de hombre (CMG, Sp.)	a young girl in jeans and a man's jacket
enfermo de bronquitis	sick with/from bronchitis
loco de alegría	mad with joy

(1) *De* + an adjective is a common colloquial way of describing the condition something is in, especially when the condition is in some way extreme or surprising:

La cesta de costura casi no cierra de puro llena (CMG, Sp.)	The sewing basket almost won't shut because it's so full
De puro ansioso, Javier había bostezado (MB, Ur.)	Javier was so anxious that he yawned
Me sudaban las manos de los puros nervios (ES, Mex., dialogue)	My hands were sweating from sheer nerves

In the first two examples under (1) *puro* could be replaced by *tan.*

38.8.10 *De* used to mean 'if'

For *de* plus the infinitive for 'if', as in *de haberlo sabido no lo habrías hecho* 'had you known you wouldn't have done it', see 29.8.3.

38.8.11 *De* in expressions of age and measurements

un hombre de cuarenta años	a man aged forty
Esta soga tiene tres metros de largo	This rope is three metres long
una barra de memoria de 16 gigas	a sixteen-gig(abyte) memory stick
Tiene más de seiscientos metros de profundidad	It's more than 600 metres deep

38.8.12 *Difícil de leer, fácil de hacer*, etc.

De is used in certain circumstances with adjectives before an infinitive. Compare: *su conducta es difícil de comprender* 'his/her behaviour is difficult to understand', and *es difícil comprender su conducta* 'it's difficult to understand his/her behaviour'. See 22.10.

38.8.13 *Más de lo que . . ., menos de lo que . . .*

De plus an article is used with *que* in comparisons involving a clause: *es más listo de lo que parece* 'he's cleverer than he seems', *no uses más de los que necesites* 'don't use more (masc.) than those you need'. See 6.6 for discussion.

38.8.14 . . . *de recomendar*, . . . *de creer*, etc.

De alternates with *para* in sentences of the type 'his attitude is not to be copied', 'his stories aren't to be believed':

Sus excusas no son de/para creer	His/Her excuses aren't to be believed
Su veracidad no es muy de recomendarse (JJA, Mex., dialogue)	One can't recommend his truthfulness very highly

(1) For the phrase *muy de*, as in *no soy muy de misas* 'I'm not a great Mass-goer', see 35.4.2 note 2.

38.8.15 *De* after certain verbs meaning 'to take by', 'seize by', 'pull on', etc.

La cogió de la mano/Me tiraba de la manga	(S)he took her by the hand/(S)he was pulling my sleeve
El profesor lo/le asió de una oreja	The teacher grabbed him by an ear
. . . la fotografía del viejo y de doña Carolina, muy jóvenes, tomados de la mano (GZ, Mex.)	. . . the photo of the old man and doña Carolina, very young, holding hands

38.8.16 *De* after participles and to indicate authorship

De is sometimes used after participles to denote the agent of an action, and also often to indicate the author of a work or the main actor in a film or play:

acompañado de/por su esposa	accompanied by his wife
un viejo acompañado de un perro (MB, Ur.)	an old man accompanied by a dog
un cuento de Borges	a short story by Borges

See 38.17.2 note 1 for a discussion of the past participle + *de*.

38.8.17 *De* in certain time phrases

De is used in some set time phrases: *es un pastor alemán, pero de día está amarrado . . . Lo soltamos de noche, para que cuide* (GZ, Mex., dialogue) 'he's an Alsatian/German shepherd dog, but he's chained up by day . . . We let him loose at night to keep watch', *se levantó muy de mañana* '(s)he got up very early in the morning'.

38.8.18 *De* used in constructions of the type *pobre de ti* 'poor you'

Tendrás que habértelas con ese gandul de Julio	You'll have to tackle that lazy-bones Julio
Sólo me dejaban ir al cine si Arturo me acompañaba y los pobres de mis novios tenían que pagar el boleto del chaperón (ES, Mex., dialogue. *Boleto* here = *la entrada* in Sp.)	They only let me go to the cinema if Alberto went with me, and my poor boyfriends had to pay for the chaperone's ticket

38.8.19 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' (see 3.2.8 note 1): *puedes comprar de todo* 'you can buy a little of everything', *tráiganos de ese vino que nos sirvió ayer* 'bring us some of that wine you served us yesterday'.

38.8.20 *De* after verbs

De is used after numerous verbs which must be learned separately, e.g. *acordarse de* 'to remember', *apoderarse de* 'to get hold of', *calificar/tachar/tildar de* 'to describe/label as', *compadecerse de* 'to take pity on', *culpar de* 'to blame for', *encargarse de* 'to take charge of', *jactarse de* 'to boast of', *librarse/deshacerse de* 'to get rid of', *burlarse de* 'to mock', *reírse de* 'to laugh at', and many more.

38.8.21 *De* can replace relative clauses

The following construction is quite common in spoken Spanish:

Hace unos guisos sabrosos de mucho llenar (CMG, Sp., = *que llenan mucho*)	She makes delicious, really filling stews
Es hombre de poco comer/que come poco	He isn't a big eater/He doesn't eat a lot

38.8.22 *Deber* or *deber de*?

For the choice between *debe ser* and *debe de ser* both translatable as 'she/he/it must be' see 25.3.

38.8.23 *Acompañado de, seguido de*: see 38.8.16

38.8.24 *De* before *que*

Some verbs, all verbal phrases involving a noun or adjective, and some adverbial phrases should be followed by *de que* when they introduce a clause: *nos dimos cuenta de que ya no llovía* 'we realized that it was no longer raining'. See 37.4.2 for discussion.

38.8.25 *Dequeísmo*

For the popular but stigmatized tendency to use *de que* instead of *que* after verbs of belief and communication, e.g. ?*Marta dice de que no viene* for *. . . dice que no viene* 'Marta says she isn't coming', see 37.4.3.

38.9 *Desde*

The existence of two Spanish words which can both mean 'from' is a source of confusion for foreigners.

Desde emphasizes the point of origin or the idea of movement or distance more than *de*. It is therefore appropriate – but usually optional – when motion 'from' a place requires some unusual effort or when the point of origin is stressed as in *os veo desde mi ventana* 'I can see you from my window'. It is also freely used in time phrases to mean 'since': see 36.3.7.

In some of these examples *de* could replace *desde*, but in some cases *desde* must be used:

Desde/De nuestro balcón se divisa la cima	From our balcony one can make out the summit
Desde aquí el camino es muy bueno	From here the road is very good
He venido andando desde el/del centro	I've walked all the way from the centre
Y entonces una soga lo atrapó desde atrás (JC, Arg.)	Then he was caught from behind by a rope
Desde hoy/A partir de hoy/De hoy en adelante tienen que llegar a tiempo	From today you must arrive on time
Los tenemos desde/de cincuenta pesos hasta doscientos	We have them from 50 pesos to 200
Desde siempre oí que ella era perfecta (AM, Mex., dialogue)	I had always heard that she was perfect

(1) *Desde* clarifies sentences like *puedes enviar imágenes desde tu móvil* 'you can send images from your mobile/cell phone', where *de tu móvil* might mean 'images of your mobile/cell phone'. Cf. also *cómo enviar SMS gratis desde Internet* 'how to send free text messages via the Internet', where *de Internet* might sound like 'Internet texts'.

(2) If *a*, *hasta* or some other preposition of destination appears, *desde* is often interchangeable with *de*: *de/desde aquí a/hasta el centro* 'from here to the centre', *de/desde aquí a la cima mide ocho mil metros* 'from here to the summit it measures 8,000 metres', *desde/de 1982 a 1992 estuve en Colombia* 'from 1982 to 1992 I was in Colombia'.

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 arriving from other galaxies', *¿desde dónde hablas?* 'where are you talking from?', *desde entonces no lo/le he vuelto a ver* 'since then I haven't seen him'.

In sentences like the following *de* and *desde* mean something different: *desde chiquitas nos enseñaron que debíamos abrirnos paso en la vida por nosotras mismas* (ES, Mex., dialogues) 'from the time we were little girls they taught us to make our own way in life', but *de chiquitas no nos dejaban salir de la casa* 'when we were little girls they didn't let us go out of the house'.

In the following types of sentence, 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* '(s)he took three diamonds from the bag', *pasó de secretaria a jefa en tres meses* 'she went from secretary to boss in three months', *hizo una maqueta de un trozo de madera* '(s)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* '(s)he's come from Spain to live in England', *solo/sólo la veo de Pascuas a Ramos* 'I only see her once in a blue moon' (lit. 'from Easter to Palm Sunday').

(3) The phrases *desde este punto de vista/desde esta perspectiva* 'from this point of view' are very common (***de*** *este punto de vista* seems almost to have dropped out of use): *lo criticó desde una perspectiva/un punto de vista marxista* '(s)he criticized it from a Marxist perspective/standpoint'.

(4) *Desde ya* is commonly found in the River Plate region, and increasingly in Spain, for 'right away'; *desde ahora ya* is more common in Spain. *Desde luego* means 'of course' on both continents.

(5) *Desde* should not be used to join nouns unless the meaning of the first noun justifies its use: *la vuelta desde Madrid* for 'the return from Madrid' is possible, but **el tren desde Madrid* should be rephrased *el tren que viene de Madrid*.

(6) *Desde* sometimes has a negative meaning in colloquial Mexican Spanish in sentences like *regresé desde el sábado* = Spain *no volví hasta el sábado* 'I didn't get back until Saturday'.

38.10 *Durante*

This word, which means 'during', 'for . . .' a period of time, and other ways of saying '*for* a period of time' is discussed in Chapter 36.

38.11 *En*

En seems vague to English speakers since it means 'in' and 'on' as well as 'at', 'into' and 'onto': *en la caja* 'in the box', *en la mesa* 'on/at the table', *está en la comisaría* '(s)he's in/at the police station', *en el semáforo* 'at the traffic lights'. Spanish-speaking learners of English have considerable problems differentiating 'in', 'on' and 'at'. For *en* and 'at' in sentences like 'at the station', 'at Cambridge', see 38.2.2.

When it means 'on a surface', it alternates with *sobre* (see 38.20) and also sometimes with *encima de* 'on top of'. One can say *en/sobre/encima de la mesa* 'on the table', but *mi hijo duerme en su cama* 'my son sleeps in his bed', since 'inside' is implied. *En* may be replaced by *dentro de* if the idea of 'inside' needs to be emphasized.

38.11.1 *En* as an equivalent of 'in', 'on' or 'at'

Tus camisas están en el cajón	Your shirts are in the drawer
Cuelga el cuadro en la pared	Hang the picture on the wall
Dio unos golpes discretos en la puerta	(S)he tapped discreetly on/at the door
La llave está en la puerta	The key's in the door
Gasto mucho dinero en juegos de azar	I spend a lot of money on gambling
. . . sentado a/en una mesa (see note 1)	. . . sitting at a table
Nos bajamos en la próxima parada	We're getting out at the next stop
El agua ha penetrado en las vigas	The water has soaked into the joists
Uno de mis pendientes se me ha caído en el agua (see note 2)	One of my earrings fell off in the water
Propusieron convertirlo en sanatorio en otoño/primavera/1924	They suggested turning it into a sanatorium in autumn/spring/1924
En las mañanas salíamos a montar a caballo (AM, Mex., Sp. *por las mañanas*)	In the mornings we used to go riding
Todavía está en proyecto	It's still at the planning stage

Te da ciento y raya en latín	(S)he's miles better than you in Latin
Deja un mensaje en mi buzón de voz	Leave a message on my voice-mail

(1) Compare *se sentó a/en la mesa* '(s)he sat down at table' with *siempre se comporta bien en la mesa* '(s)he always behaves well at table'. See 38.2.2 for discussion.

(2) *Entrar* and similar verbs take *en* (often *a* in Latin America, and occasionally in Spain): *entró en el cuarto* '(s)he entered the room', but *no puedes entrar a mi casa si no te he invitado* (EM, Mex., dialogue) 'you can't come into my house if I haven't invited you', Spain *entrar en . . .*

(3) For the translation of phrases like 'the men in Mexico', 'the books in the drawer', see 38.1.4.

38.11.2 *En* used to express the thing by which something else is judged or estimated

El tipo quedó fijado en 1,93 por dólar	The rate was fixed at 1.93 to the dollar
Lo vendieron en/por un millón de euros (*por* is more usual)	They sold it for a million euros
Te tenía en más estima	I thought better of you
El progreso logrado en esta investigación es computable en cero	The progress achieved in this investigation can be reckoned at/as zero
. . . superar en cuatro a uno	. . . to be four times greater
Me lo presupuestaron en cien mil	They gave me an estimate of 100,000 for it
El gobierno congeló el precio de la masa en veinticinco centavos (JA, Mex.)	The Government froze the price of [tortilla] dough at 25 centavos
Lo/Le conocí en el andar	I recognized him from the way he walked

38.11.3 *En* in a number of adverbial phrases

Lo tomaron en serio	They took it/him seriously
en mangas de camisa/en cueros/en (or *de*) *broma/en balde*	in shirtsleeves/naked/as a joke/pointlessly
en fila/en seguida (or *enseguida*)	in a row/straight away
Estoy en contra	I'm against
Ve tú en mi representación (ABV, Sp., dialogue)	You stand in for me/represent me
Soy el primero en reconocerlo	I'm the first to admit/recognize it

38.11.4 Use of *en* after a number of common verbs, and in several miscellaneous constructions

Pensé mucho en usted	I thought about you a lot
Se fijó en él	(S)he noticed him
Tardaron en reparar el coche	They took time to repair the car

Also *quedar en* 'to agree to', *vacilar/dudar en* 'to hesitate over', *empeñarse/insistir/obstinarse en* 'to insist on', *abdicar en* 'to abdicate in favour of', *interesarse en/por* 'to be interested in', *ser el primero/último en* 'to be the first/last to . . .', *terminaron en la cárcel* 'they ended up in jail', *el partido acabó en empate* 'the game ended in a draw'.

See 22.2.2 for further remarks about prepositional usage with verbs. For the obsolete construction *en* + gerund see 24.5.

38.12 *Entre*

Entre means both 'between' and 'among'. It also has a number of uses unfamiliar to English speakers.

38.12.1 *Entre* = 'between'

Estábamos entre la espada y la pared	We were between the sword and the wall (i.e. had our backs to the wall)
. . . constantemente entre la excitación y la depresión (MVM, Sp.)	. . . constantly between excitement and depression
Cuestan entre mil y dos mil	They cost between one and two thousand
entre tú/usted y yo . . . (See 38.12.5 note 1)	between you and me . . .
Entre todos rehabilitaremos Madrid (poster)	Between us all we'll modernize Madrid
. . . trozos de una novela rosa que fuimos escribiendo entre las dos (CMG, Sp.)	. . . bits of a romantic novel we were writing between the two of us
Tuvieron que separarla del cadáver entre dos enfermeras (ES, Mex., dialogue)	It took two nurses to drag her from the body

The previous example reflects a construction unfamiliar to English speakers: *llenan el pantano entre cuatro ríos* (from María Moliner, I, 1146; *pantano* also means 'swamp'/'marsh') 'four rivers combine to fill the reservoir', more naturally expressed by *se necesitan/son necesarios cuatro ríos para llenar el pantano.*

38.12.2 *Entre* = 'among'

It is used with a wider range of nouns than its English equivalent, e.g. *entre el humo* 'in/through the smoke', *encontraron la sortija entre la arena* 'they found the ring in the sand':

Vivió entre los beduinos	(S)he lived among the Bedouins
La perdí de vista entre la muchedumbre	I lost sight of her in the crowd
. . . y entre el ruido de la lluvia se escuchaba el ladrido de los perros (LS, Ch.)	. . . and through/above the noise of the rain the barking of the dogs was heard
Entre la niebla se percibía una masa inquieta (LMD, Sp.)	A shifting mass/shape could be seen in/through the fog
Vimos a varios soldados escondidos entre la hierba (EP, Mex.)	We saw several soldiers hiding in the grass

38.12.3 *Entre* = 'among themselves'

Entre is especially liable to appear with the pronoun *sí* (discussed in detail at 13.3).

Hablan castellano entre sí (or *entre ellos*)	They speak Spanish among themselves
Es más fácil que dos personas vivan en armonía cuando se respetan entre sí	It's easier for two people to live in harmony when they respect one another
Enseguida notamos el recelo manifiesto que se dispensan entre sí (EL, Arg. One can also write *en seguida*)	We immediately noticed the obvious distrust they felt for one another
La idea del nuevo presidente era hacer que los dos polos políticos se enfrentaran entre sí (JA, Mex.)	The new president's idea was to get the two opposing political extremes to clash with one another

38.12.4 *Entre* = 'what with . . .'

Entre los niños y el estruendo de los albañiles, me estoy volviendo loca	What with the children and the din of the builders, I'm going crazy
entre pitos y flautas . . .	what with one thing and another . . . (lit. 'what with whistles and flutes')
Entre las presiones del lado sindical . . . y los reclamos del entorno palaciego, Isabel se enfermó (MSQ, Arg. *Reclamos = quejas* and *enfermarse = enfermar* in Sp.)	What with the pressure from the trade unions . . . and the complaints from the palace milieu, Isabel [Perón] fell ill

38.12.5 Miscellaneous uses of *entre*

In certain phrases *entre* is used in a way which is strange to English speakers:

Decía entre mí/sí . . .	I said to myself/(s)he said to her/himself
El museo está abierto entre semana	The museum is open Monday to Saturday
Tengo un asunto entre manos	I've got some business in hand

(1) Important: prepositional forms of pronouns are not now 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*), *entre tú y yo* 'between you and me'. But the prepositional form *sí*, from *se*, is used after *entre* – *hablan francés entre sí* 'they speak French with one another'. The form *entre nos* for *entre nosotros* is heard in Latin America: *eso lo digo aquí entre nos ¿eh? no lo publique* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'I'm saying that just between us, eh? Don't publish it'.

(2) In everyday Colombian Spanish *entre* is often used for *en* when the latter indicates spatial location: *todavía conservo esa nota, siempre la llevo conmigo entre la billetera* (LR, Col., dialogue) 'I still keep that note, I always carry it with me in my wallet', *optó por permanecer día y noche inactiva entre la cama* (ibid.) 'she chose to stay day and night in bed doing nothing'.

38.13 *Hacia*

38.13.1 *Hacia* = 'towards' a place or thing

Hacia is a close equivalent of 'towards', but rather wider in application since it also translates the English suffix –'ward'/-'wards' and also 'around' in time phrases:

La nave viaja hacia Venus	The spaceship is travelling towards Venus
Señaló hacia el este	(S)he pointed to the east
Maniobró su telescopio Zeiss y apuntó hacia Sirio (EP, Mex.)	He adjusted his Zeiss telescope and pointed it towards Sirius
El incidente ocurrió hacia las tres	The incident occurred around three o'clock
El coche rodaba hacia atrás	The car was rolling backwards

38.13.2 *Hacia* to express emotions and 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*. For *para con* see 38.6.2.

mi profundo amor hacia/por todo lo andaluz	my deep love for everything Andalusian
Mostraba una indiferencia total hacia/ por las críticas	(S)he displayed total indifference towards criticisms
. . . clara antipatía hacia Miguel Alemán (JA, Mex.)	. . . obvious dislike of Miguel Alemán

(1) In time phrases *hacia* can less commonly be replaced by *sobre*: *hacia/sobre finales de agosto* 'around the end of August', *hacia/sobre las tres de la tarde*, 'around 3 p.m.', or, with dates, by *para*: *para octubre* 'towards/around October'.

38.14 *Hasta* = 'as far as', 'until', 'up to'

hasta ahora	until now/up to now
Llegaron hasta el oasis	They got as far as the oasis
Algunos padres se quedaban hasta que se izara la bandera (CP, Arg.)	Some parents stayed until the flag was raised
Siguió leyendo hasta que no había luz	(S)he kept reading until there was no light
Bailaron hasta no poder más	They danced until they were exhausted
Estoy hasta la coronilla de exámenes	I'm sick to death of exams
hasta luego	goodbye/see you later

(1) Important: from Mexico to Colombia *hasta* has acquired the additional meaning in some contexts of '*not* until': *perdona que te llame hasta ahora* (CF, Mex., 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'. But *hasta* is also used in the standard way in these regions: *caminó enojado hasta la puerta del ascensor* (CF, Mex. Spain *enfadado hasta . . .*) 'he walked angrily as far as the lift/elevator door'.

(2) For *hasta que no* see 27.2.4.

(3) For *hasta* = *incluso* 'even', see 35.8.

38.15 *Mediante*

'By means of' some instrument or device:

Lograron abrir la caja mediante/con una antorcha de butano	They managed to open the safe by means of a butane torch
También se podrán enviar canciones mediante los mensajes de texto (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	It will also be possible to send songs by means of text messages

38.16 *Para*

38.16.1 The basic difference *para* and *por*

Para and *por* both often translate 'for' although they nearly always mean different things. They also have many other uses, and this makes generalizations difficult.

One basic distinction between them when they seem to mean 'for' is that *para* expresses purpose or destination and *por* cause or motive. This is clear from 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 for you/on your

behalf'/'because of you'. Cf. *quiero que me hagas un favor. Hazlo por mí* (MC, Mex., dialogue) 'I want you to do me a favour. Do it for my sake'.

English speakers are usually confused by sentences like 'they put up this fence for the rabbits'. Assuming this means 'because of the rabbits' and not 'for the benefit of the rabbits', one says *pusieron esta valla por los conejos*. The Spanish Civil Guards' motto *Todo por la Patria* 'Everything for our Country' means 'everything we do is done for our country's sake'. *Todo para la Patria* would mean 'everything we have or make is for 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* '(s)he did it for (out of) love', *lo hago por el dinero* 'I do it for (because of) the money':

Llevo el abrigo por/a causa de mi madre	I'm wearing this coat because of my mother (i.e. she'll be worried if I don't)
Llevo este abrigo para/a mi madre	I'm taking this coat to my mother
Han llegado por ti	They've come to get you/they've come because of you/instead of you
Han venido estos paquetes para ti	These parcels have come for you
Lo has conseguido por mí	You've got it through/thanks to me
Lo has conseguido para mí	You've got it for me

Particularly troublesome is the fact that *por* and *para* can mean almost the same thing in some sentences involving intentions, e.g. *ha venido por/para estar contigo* '(s)he's come to be with you', whereas in others only *para* is possible. This problem is discussed at 38.17.16.

(1) The form *pa* is substandard for *para*. It is accepted in a few humorous familiar expressions used in Spain and possibly elsewhere, e.g. *es muy echao palante* 'he's very forward' (*echao* is very familiar or substandard for *echado*), *estoy pal arrastre* 'I'm all-in/exhausted', *pal gato* 'junk' (literally 'for the cat').

38.16.2 *Para* to express purpose, object or destination

Before a verb other than an infinitive, *para que* must be used.

Una mesa para dos, por favor	A table for two, please
Para hacer login hay que teclear la contraseña	To log in you have to enter the password
Viniste para espiarnos, ¿verdad? (MC, Mex., dialogue)	You came to spy on us, didn't you?
Un coche hecho para durar (advert., Sp.)	A car made to last
Estudia para médico	(S)he's studying to become a doctor
Mañana te daré instrucciones para que nos entregues el dinero (EM, Mex., dialogue)	I'll give you instructions tomorrow so you can hand over the money to us

(1) See 38.17.16 for the possible use of *por* in certain contexts to indicate purpose.

(2) *A que* can replace *para que* after verbs of motion like *ir*, *venir*, *subir*, *bajar*: *¿a/para qué has venido?* 'what have you come for', *fui al dentista a que/para que me sacara/sacase una muela* 'I went to the dentist to have a tooth out'.

(3) *Para* can also express ironic or thwarted purpose, like the English 'only to': *corrió a casa para encontrarse con que ya se habían marchado* '(s)he hurried home only to find that they'd already left'.

(4) The following construction may also be thought of as expressing object or purpose: *sus historias no son para/de creer* 'his/her stories aren't to be believed' (lit. 'aren't for believing'), *no es para tanto* 'it's not that serious/no need for so much fuss', *¿no es un poco tarde para pensar en casarse?* 'isn't it a bit late for thinking of getting married?'

(5) For the difference between *¿por qué?* 'why?' and *¿para qué?* 'what for?', see 28.10.

38.16.3 *Para* used to indicate direction after verbs of motion

La secretaria ya ha salido para Burgos	The secretary has already left for Burgos
Acaba de llamar la señora y dice que viene para la casa (GR, Mex., dialogue)	The *señora* has just called and she says she's coming home
Ya va para viejo	(S)he's getting old now
Va para millonario	He's on the way to becoming a millionaire
Visualizó a Juan caminando para arriba y para abajo (EP, Mex.)	He pictured Juan walking up and down

(1) *Para* can link two nouns where we would use 'to' or 'for': *ha llegado el tren para/de Madrid* 'the train to/for Madrid has arrived', *agua para perros* 'water for dogs'. See 38.1.4.

38.16.4 *Para* used 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
Que para él lo nuestro era lo más sublime, que adónde iba a ir yo que más me quisieran. (ES, Mex., dialogue)	[he said] that for him what we had was the most wonderful thing of all, where would I go where they'd loved me more?

38.16.5 *Para* to indicate reaction, response, mood

Esto para mí huele a vinagre/Esto a mí me huele a vinagre	This smells of vinegar to me
Yo no tengo amigos. Para mí, que mi mujer los espanta	I haven't got any friends. If you ask me, my wife scares them away
Para su padre es un genio	(S)he's a genius in his/her father's eyes
No estoy para bromas	I'm not in the mood for jokes

(1) For *para con* in sentences like *es muy atento para con los invitados* 'he's very courteous towards guests', see 38.6.2.

38.16.6 *Para* = '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 nonsense
Es poco dinero para tanto trabajo	It's not much money for so much work
Para lo que hace ese departamento sería mejor cerrarlo	For all/Considering what that department does, one might as well close it
. . . un matrimonio bastante rápido para lo mucho que siempre se dice que hay que pensárselo (JM, Sp.)	. . . a pretty quick marriage considering how much they always say you ought to think it over

Para ser extranjera sabe mucho de política argentina	She knows a lot about Argentine politics for a foreigner

38.16.7 *Para* to translate '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	(S)he was muttering to himself/herself

38.16.8 *Para* = '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/a punto de hervir	The milk's about to boil
Pues yo estoy para cumplir treinta y cinco la semana que viene (EA, Sp., dialogue)	Well, I'm going to be thirty-five next week

(1) In Latin America *estar por* is used: *en 1942, cuando volvió definitivamente, estaba por cumplir veinte años* (SP, Mex.) 'in 1942, when he came back for good, he was on the verge of his twentieth birthday', *oye bien. Un pájaro está por cantar* (JLB, Arg.) 'listen. A bird is about to sing', *el helicóptero está por llegar* (MC, Mex., dialogue) 'the helicopter's about to arrive'.

38.16.9 *Para* in time phrases

(a) To translate 'by' a certain time:

Lo tendré preparado para las cinco	I'll have it ready by/for five o'clock
Si ensayamos fuerte durante todo el año, para el verano estaremos en condiciones de actuar (SP, Sp., dialogue)	If we rehearse hard all year we'll be ready to perform by summer
Para entonces ya vivíamos en Brooklyn (JV, Mex., dialogue)	By then we were already living in Brooklyn
La derecha tradicional para esas alturas ya no dudaba de las bondades del régimen (JA, Mex.)	By that stage [of the affair], the traditional right wing no longer had any doubts about the good aspects of the regime

(b) To translate 'for' a period of time:

Para sometimes expresses the idea of 'for *n* days/weeks/years'. See 36.3.6.

(1) In *volvemos para agosto*, *para* is more precise than *hacia* and *por* and less precise than *en*.

(2) *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'.

38.16.10 *Para* to translate 'enough to', 'considering how much'

No había tomado suficientes pastillas (*como*) *para ponerse enfermo*	He hadn't taken enough pills to make himself sick/ill
Lleva encima tres dry martinis, suficientes para sentirse liberada (JV, Mex.)	She's downed three dry martinis, enough to feel liberated

38.17 *Por*

38.17.1 *Por* = 'because of'

Por often means 'because of', 'on account of':

No pudimos salir por/a causa de la nieve	We couldn't go out because of the snow
la razón por la que me voy	the reason for my leaving
muchas gracias por el regalo	many thanks for the present
todo por un arranque de genio . . .	all because of a fit of anger . . .
Te ha pasado por dejado	It happened to you because you're careless
Se creía en la gloria por llevar un remendado vestido de novia (ES, Mex., dialogue)	She thought she was in Heaven ('glory') (just) because she was wearing a patched-up wedding dress
El profesor la calificó con un cero por no saber la lección (MP, Arg.)	The teacher gave her a zero because she didn't know the lesson
Liquidación por cierre	Closing-down sale

Por may therefore indicate the origin or inspiration of an emotion or mental state:

La admiro por su generosidad	I admire her for her generosity
nuestro amor por/hacia/a nuestros hijos	our love for our children
Era famoso por mandón y arrogante (JA, Mex.)	He was notoriously bossy and arrogant
Tu mamá se desmaya por todo (EM, Mex., dialogue)	Your mother faints over everything
No por previsible la foto anual dejaba de ser un acontecimiento excepcional (EL, Arg.)	Predictability did not stop the annual photograph being an exceptional event

(1) Note the expression common to Spain and Latin America, *darle a uno por* 'to take up (a hobby, etc.'/'to get keen on', e.g. *a Carlos le ha dado por el arte* (LO, Cu., dialogue) 'Carlos has taken up art'.

38.17.2 *Por* = 'by' in passive constructions

Fuimos atacados por los policías (EP, Mex., dialogue)	We were attacked by the police
La catedral fue diseñada por Gaudí	The cathedral was designed by Gaudí

(1) *De* is not nowadays used in passive sentences to mean 'by', except with certain verbs which are best learned separately. Where there is a possibility of using either *por* or *de*, the former usually implies an activity, the latter a state or condition. *De* is therefore common when *estar* is used (see 32.2.5 for *ser destruido* contrasted with *estar destruido*): *me sentía tentado de tomar el atajo* 'I felt tempted to take the short cut', *María dijo algunas palabras en voz muy baja . . . seguidas* ***de*** *un ruido de sillas* (E S, Arg.) 'Maria said a few words in a very low voice . . . followed by a noise [i.e. scraping] of chairs', *el formulario debe estar/ir acompañado de dos fotos* 'the form must be accompanied by two photos', *las zonas pantanosas suelen estar plagadas de mosquitos* 'marshy zones are usually plagued with mosquitoes'; but *en verano las vacas son atormentadas por las moscas* 'in summer the cows are tormented by flies'.

(2) Phrases like *Hamlet por William Shakespeare* are seen and heard, perhaps with increasing frequency, but *Hamlet de William Shakespeare* is the time-honoured construction.

38.17.3 *Por* = 'runs *on*', 'works *by*'; 'by means of'

La alarma funciona por rayos infrarrojos	The alarm works by infra-red rays
el tratamiento por/con rayos X (*equis*)	Treatment by X-rays
un coche que marcha por/con/a hidrógeno	a car running on hydrogen
La televisión por cable tiene 16 millones de suscriptores (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	Cable TV has 16 million subscribers
[*el Buda*] *enseñaba la aniquilación del dolor por la aniquilación del deseo* (JLB, Arg.)	[the Buddha] taught the extinction of suffering by the extinction of desire

38.17.4 *Por* = 'in support of', 'in favour of', 'on behalf of', 'for . . . 's sake'

Yo voté por que tu libro fuera premiado (RA, Cu.)	I voted in favour of your book getting the prize
¿Estás tú por la no violencia?	Do you support non-violence?
Encuentro de Escritores por la Paz	Conference of Writers for Peace
Es senador por Massachusetts	He's Senator for Massachusetts
Aprendió a tocar el piano por sí misma/ella sola	She learned to play the piano by herself
Está por ti	(S)he finds you attractive

38.17.5 *Por* = exchange *for*, substitute *for*, distribution *per*

Te lo cambiarán por uno nuevo	They'll change it for a new one for you
Ahora daría lo que no tengo por oírla (CMG, Sp.)	Now I'd give everything I haven't got to hear her
Te han dado gato por liebre	They've served you cat for hare (i.e. swindled you)
¿Por quién me toma usted?	Who do you take me for?
Lo doy por supuesto/sentado	I take it for granted
Él dará la clase por mí	He'll give the class instead of me
Comes por tres	You eat enough for three people
tres raciones por persona	three helpings/servings per person
cien kilómetros por hora	100 km an hour
40 horas a la/por semana (*a* is more usual)	40 hours a week
la media anual por español	the annual average per Spaniard
El dos por ciento es protestante/son protestantes	Two per cent are Protestants
Fueron entrando uno por uno	They came in one by one

38.17.6 *Por* in expressions of price and amounts of money

un cheque por/de cien dólares	a cheque/US check for 100 dollars
Compró una casa por un millón de dólares	(S)he bought a house for one million dollars

(1) Important: in Spain *por* is used with *pagar* only when the latter already has a direct object in the form of a quantity of money: *he pagado mil dólares por este ordenador* (Lat. Am. *por esta computadora* or *este computador*) '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'. *NGLE* 36.31 reports that sentences like *pagaste por las cervezas* (Sp. *pagaste las cervezas*) 'you paid for the beers' are common in some Latin-American countries.

38.17.7 *Por* = 'to judge *by*'

. . . por las señas que me ha dado . . .	. . . from the description (s)he's given me . . .
. . . por lo que tú dices . . .	. . . from what you say . . .
por lo visto	apparently
Evidentemente, por su voz, por su aspecto, por su ropa era una persona decente (GCI, Cu.)	Evidently, to judge by his voice, looks and clothes, he was a respectable person
Por mí haz lo que quieras	As far as I'm concerned, do what you like

38.17.8 *Por* = 'in search *of*'

European speech prefers *a por*, a construction rejected by Latin Americans but now accepted by the Academy (*NGLE* 29.5n) and welcomed by Manuel Seco on the grounds that *fui por ella* could mean 'I went instead of her/on her behalf', whereas *. . . a por ella* is only 'to look for her'/'to find her':

Voy al baño a por Kleenex (CRG, Sp., Lat. Am. *por Kleenex*)	I'm going/I go to the bathroom to get a tissue
Fui por mi abrigo (AM, Mex., Sp. *a por*)	I went for my coat/I went to get my coat

38.17.9 *Por* = 'through' in the sense of 'by means of'

Conseguí el empleo por/a través de mi tío	I got the job through my uncle
Me enteré por un amigo	I found out from a friend
Consiguió el puesto por sus contactos	(S)he got the job through her/his contacts

38.17.10 *Por* in adverbial phrases of manner

por correo/avión/mar (but *en tren*, *en coche*, *en bicicleta*, *a pie*)	by mail/air/sea/ (by train/car/by bicycle/on foot)
Los denuncio por igual	I denounce both/all sides equally
por lo general/generalmente	generally
por lo corriente/corrientemente	usually
Me lo tendrás que decir por las buenas o por las malas	You'll have to tell me one way or another
por orden alfabético	in alphabetical order
Es agrimensor, o algo por el estilo	He's a surveyor, or something like that

and numerous others which must be learned from the dictionary.

38.17.11 *Por* = 'however . . .' in concessions (see 20.5.2)

Por más inteligente que seas, no lo vas a resolver	However intelligent you may be, you won't solve it
No entendió, por más que se esforzó, la frase que le repetía (EP, Mex.)	However much she tried, she didn't grasp the phrase he was repeating to her

38.17.12 *Por* = 'multiplied *by*', 'measured *by*'

Cinco por tresson quince	5 times 3 equals 15
Mide 7 por 5	It measures 7 by 5

Una sociedad se mide por el trato que otorga a los débiles (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	The measure of a society is the way it treats the weak

38.17.13 *Por* used with numerous verbs

Por is used with many verbs which must be learned separately, e.g.

afanarse por to strive to	*luchar por* to struggle to
apurarse por get anxious about	*molestarse por* to bother about
asustarse por/de get frightened about	*optar por* to opt for
decidirse por to decide on	*preguntar por* to ask about/after
desvelarse por to be very concerned about	*preocuparse por* to worry about
disculparse por to apologize for	*rezar por* to pray for
esforzarse por to make an effort to	*tomar por* to take for
interesarse por/en to be interested in	*votar por* to vote for
jurar por swear by/on	

These verbs may be followed by *porque* to express purpose, e.g. *me esforzaba porque/para que todos comieran/comiesen bien* 'I made an effort so that they would all eat well'. In this construction, they are followed by the subjunctive (see 20.4.3, note 1).

38.17.14 *Por* in time phrases

(a) *Por* = 'in', but less precise than *en* where the latter is also possible:

Debió de ser por mayo	It must have been some time in May
por aquellos días	in those days/during those days
Por esa época la mayoría de los países sudamericanos estaban gobernados por dictaduras militares (QSM, Arg.)	At that time the majority of Latin-American countries were ruled by military dictatorships

(b) For 'just for', 'only for' and for more details on *por* in time phrases see 36.3.5.

38.17.15 *Por* as a preposition of place

(a) 'All over', 'throughout'

Han cancelado su gira por Latinoamérica	They've cancelled their Latin-American tour
Había muchos libros desparramados por el suelo	There were many books scattered over the floor
Oye, ¿me das crema por/en la espalda?	Could you please put cream on my back?
Es duro por fuera pero por dentro es blando	It's hard outside but soft on the inside

(b) 'In': less precise than *en* and often implying motion:

La vi por/en la calle	I saw her in the street
Creo que las mujeres andan por Europa (MB, Ur., dialogue)	I think the women are somewhere in Europe
Debe de estar por el jardín	It must be somewhere in the garden
Yo no sabía por dónde empezar	I didn't know where to begin

(c) 'Up to':

El agua le llegaba por/a/hasta la cintura	The water was up to his/her waist

Me llegas por los hombros	You reach my shoulders (e.g. to a growing child)

(d) 'Through', 'out of', 'down':

respirar por la boca	to breathe through the mouth
Entró por la puerta/la ventana	(S)he came through the door/window
Se cayó por la escalera	(S)he fell down the stairs
Salía agua por el/del grifo	Water was coming out of the tap
El tren pasó por/a través del túnel	The train went through the tunnel
por/vía Madrid	through/via Madrid

(e) In conjunction with adverbs of place, to denote direction or whereabouts:

por aquí	this way/around here
por delante/detrás	in front/from behind
por entre	in between

38.17.16 *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:

¿Para qué has venido?	What have you come for?
¿Por qué has venido?	Why have you come?
Estoy aquí para/por verlo/le	I've come to see him
Ella le habría vendido el alma al Diablo por casarse con él (GGM, Col.)	She'd have sold her soul to the Devil to marry him
. . . mientras no se resignara a la decadencia física o hiciera algo por evitarla (ES, Mex.)	. . . as long as she didn't resign herself to a physical decline or do something to avoid it

(1) Important: if an 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. 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 (*para* could be used). But **el fontanero* (Lat. Am. *plomero*) *ha venido por reparar el grifo* is as absurd as 'the plumber has come because he feels like mending the tap/faucet'. Another example: —*¿Para qué salgo a cenar contigo?* —*Para comer* (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 conmigo* '"Why am I going out to dinner with you?" "To be with me"'.

(2) After some words *por* is required: *teníamos prisa por verla* 'we were in a hurry to see her', *el celo por la reforma* 'eagerness for reform', *el anhelo por la gloria* 'the longing for glory'. There is a list of verbs that take *por* at 38.17.13.

38.17.17 Some vital differences between *por* and *para*

Tengo muchas cosas por/sin hacer	I have a lot of things still to do
Tengo muchas cosas para/que hacer (*que* is more usual)	I have many things to do
Estoy por hacerlo	I feel inclined to do it
Estoy (*aquí*) *para hacerlo*	I'm here in order to do it
Estaba para hacerlo (Lat. Am. *por*)	I was about to do it

Está por/sin acabar	It isn't finished yet
Está para (Lat. Am. *por*) *acabar de un momento a otro*	(S)he/It's about to finish at any moment

38.17.18 'For' not translated by *por* or *para*

la razón de mi queja	the reason for my complaining
Los días eran cortos pues era ahora noviembre (see 37.5.3 for *pues*)	The days were short, for it was now November
el deseo de fama	the desire for fame
Lloró de alegría	(S)he wept for joy
Es una buena secretaria a pesar de lo que gruñe	She's a good secretary, for all her grumbling
No dijo una palabra durante dos horas	(S)he didn't say a word for two hours
No lo/le he visto desde hace meses	I haven't seen him for months
Llevamos tres semanas sin que recojan la basura	They haven't collected our rubbish/US garbage for three weeks
Estuvimos horas esperando	We waited for hours
Se podía ver muy lejos	You could see for miles
ir a dar un paseo	to go for a walk
ir de vacaciones	to go for a holiday/vacation
Me voy a Madrid unos días	I'm going to Madrid for a few days

38.18 *Según*

The basic meaning of *según* is 'according to' or 'depending on':

según el parte meteorológico	according to the weather report
Iremos modificando el programa de estudios según el tipo de estudiante que se matricule	We'll modify the syllabus according to the type of student that signs on
Los precios varían según a qué dentista vayas (or *según el dentista al que vayas*)	The prices vary according to which dentist you go to
Los hombres salían al campo . . . a labrar con el arado según la época del año (EP, Mex.)	The men went out into the fields to plough/US plow depending on the time of the year
Me decidiré luego, según cómo salgan las cosas	I'll decide later, depending on how things turn out

(1) Important: as with *entre*, a following pronoun appears in the ordinary subject form: *según yo/tú* 'according to me/you', not **según mí/ti*: *según tú, Lencho, ¿cuál es la solución si los mexicanos no tienen ni voz ni voto en las decisiones de gobierno?* (EP, Mex., dialogue) 'in your opinion, Lencho, what's the solution if Mexicans have no say (lit. 'have neither voice nor vote') in the Government's decisions?'

(2) As some of the examples show, *según* often functions as an adverb: *—¿Vas tú también? —Según* '"Are you going too?" "It depends"', *según llegábamos al aparcamiento . . . un automóvil abandonaba un lugar grande y espacioso* (CRG, Sp.) 'just as we were arriving at the parking lot . . . a car was leaving a large and roomy space', *según dicen . . .* 'according to what they say . . .'.

(3) 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 latter example being typical of eastern Spain.

38.19 *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 ending in -ing: cf. *dos Coca-Colas sin abrir* 'two Coca-Colas, unopened' (or 'not opened'). See 22.5.

No subas al tren sin billete	Don't get on the train without a ticket
Se fueron sin siquiera despedirse	They left without even saying goodbye
Fumabas sin cesar	You were smoking non-stop
sin nadie que me ayude	without anyone to help me
Está más guapa sin peinar	She's more attractive without her hair done

(1) *Sin* can be used to create a new noun, e.g. *los sin casa* 'the homeless', *los sin papeles* (or *indocumentados*) 'illegal immigrants'. *Sin* exists as a prefix in a few words, like *sinnúmero/sinfín* 'vast abundance', *sinrazón* 'insanity'/'absurdity', *sinvergüenza* 'shameless person'.

38.20 *Sobre* (and *encima de*)

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'; it is rather more literary than *en*. *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/pitch' (i.e. sports fans).

Querían edificar sobre estos terrenos un hotel nuevo	They wanted to build a new hotel on this land
Se sentó sobre la cama y abrió un grueso tratado de economía (JV, Mex.)	He sat down on the bed and opened a thick treatise on economics
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
Dios vela sobre sus hijos	God watches over his children
Un árbol agita unas hojas secas sobre sus cabezas (JC, Arg.)	A tree is waving a few dry leaves over their heads

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/her head, just touching his/her hair
El avión voló por encima de/sobre la ciudad (motion: *sobre* implies higher altitude and is often more literary than *encima de*)	The plane flew over the city

(1) *Sobre*, when used as a spatial preposition, should not be used to join nouns in the way described at 38.1.4: ?*el libro sobre la mesa es mío* should be *el libro que está sobre la mesa es mío* 'the book on the table is mine'.

(b) Approximation (especially with time phrases):

Llegaremos sobre las cinco de la tarde	We'll arrive around 5 p.m.
Tenía sobre veinte años (*unos 20 años* is more usual)	(S)he was about twenty
Costó sobre cien mil (= *unos/unas 100.000*)	It cost around 100,000

(c) 'About' (= 'on the subject of')

In this sense, *sobre* implies formal discourse 'about' something, i.e. 'on the subject of . . .'. Informal discourse usually requires *de*, as *hablar de . . .* 'to talk about'. See 38.8.5 note 1.

(d) Centre of rotation:

Las puertas se mueven sobre bisagras	Doors turn on hinges
Dio media vuelta sobre el pie izquierdo	(S)he did a half-turn on her/his left foot
Júpiter da una vuelta sobre sí mismo cada diez horas	Jupiter rotates on its axis every ten hours

(e) Superiority or precedence 'over':

El triunfo del partido sobre la izquierda	The party's victory over the Left
Sobre todo, quisiera agradecer a mi mujer	. . . Above all, I would like to thank my wife . . .
Y, sobre cualquier escrúpulo, estaba mi hijo (AG, Sp., dialogue)	And over and above any scruples was my [still unborn] child
El crecimiento, en términos reales, supera el 50% sobre enero de 1983 (*El País*, Sp.)	In real terms, the growth in exports is 50% higher than January 1983
impuestos sobre la renta	income tax
No les gustó para nada el gravamen sobre ganancias excedentes (JA, Mex.)	They really didn't like the tax on excessive profits

38.21 *Tras*

'Behind', 'after'. It is an equivalent of the more usual *detrás de* 'behind' (location) and *después de* 'after' (time). Its brevity makes it popular with journalists but it is rare in everyday speech. *Tras de* is an equally literary but less common variant:

Dos siluetas deformes se destacaron tras el vidrio esmerilado (LG, Sp.)	Two distorted outlines loomed through/behind the frosted glass
un generoso proyecto tras el cual se esconden intenciones menos altruistas	a generous project behind which less generous intentions lurk
Me oculté tras el marco de la puerta (GC, Cu.)	I hid behind the door frame
Una banda de gaviotas venía tras el barco	A flock of gulls was following the boat
La cola de pasajeros formada tras ella la empujó hacia la puerta (ES, Mex.)	The line of passengers that had formed behind her pushed her towards the door

Detrás de could be used in all the above examples. In the following examples *tras de* or *tras* could be replaced by *después de*:

Así, tras de los duros años de 1936 a 1939 (Sp., popular press; usually simply *tras*)	. . . So, after the hard years between 1936 and 1939 . . .

Resultó dañadísimo tras el terremoto de 1985 (JA, Mex.)	It was badly damaged after the 1985 earthquake

(1) 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', *. . . una beca para primer año, que será renovada para segundo . . . y así año tras año* (MP, Arg., dialogue) '. . . a grant for the first year, which will be renewed for the second year . . . and so on year after year', *han puesto un detective tras* (*de*) *sus pasos* 'they've put a detective on his trail'.

(2) Note also the following construction: *tras tener él la culpa, se enfada* (or *encima de tener él . . .*) 'not only is it his fault; he has the nerve to get angry', *tras ladrones, bufones* (BCB, Col.) 'as well as thieves, they're clowns'.

38.22 *Versus*

The *NGLE* 29.2k reports the recent spread of this English preposition in scientific and technical language, e.g. *federalismo versus descentralización* 'federalism versus decentralization', *PC de sobremesa versus portátil* 'desktop PC versus laptop'. Conservative usage still favours *contra*.

38.23 Prepositional phrases

The following is a list of common prepositional phrases, not exhaustive. They can appear before nouns and, if their meaning is appropriate, before pronouns and infinitives. They should generally not be used to join nouns in the way described at 38.1.4: **los senadores a favor de este proyecto* is dubious Spanish for *los senadores que apoyaban/estaban a favor de este proyecto* 'the senators in favour of this project'.

a base de based on/consisting of (see note 1)
a bordo de on board (of)
a cambio de in exchange for
a cargo de in charge of
a causa de because of
a costa de at the cost of
a despecho de in spite of
a diferencia de unlike
a disposición de at the disposal of
a espaldas de behind the back of
a excepción de with the exception of
a expensas de at the expense of
a falta de for lack of
a favor de in favour of
a fin de with the aim of
a finales/fines de towards the end of
a fuerza de by dint of
a guisa de (literary) = *a modo de*
a gusto de to the taste of
a juicio de in the opinion of
a la hora de at the moment of/when it comes to . . .
a la sombra de in the shadow of
a la vera de (literary) = *al lado de*
a lo largo de throughout/along
a más de as well as
a mediados de towards the middle of
a modo de in the manner of
a partir de starting from
a pesar de despite
a por see 38.17.8
a principios de towards the beginning of
a prueba de proof, e.g. *a prueba de incendios* fireproof
a punto de on the verge of
a raíz de immediately after/as an immediate result of
a razón de at the rate of
a riesgo de at the risk of
a sabiendas de with the knowledge of
a través de through/across
a vista de in the sight/presence of
a voluntad de at the discretion of
a vuelta de e.g. *a vuelta de correo* by return of post
abajo de (Lat. Am. only) underneath; see 35.6.6
además de as well as
adentro de (Lat. Am. only) inside; see 35.6.5
afuera de (Lat. Am. only) outside; see 35.6.5
al alcance de within reach of
al amor de in the warmth of (e.g. a fire)
al cabo de at the end of

al contrario de contrary to
al corriente de informed about
al estilo de in the style of
al lado de next to
al nivel de at the level of
al tanto de = al corriente de
alrededor de around
atrás de (Lat. Am. only) behind; see 35.6.7
bajo (la) condición de que on condition of
bajo pena de on pain of . . .
cerca de near
con arreglo a in accordance with
con miras a bearing in mind/with a view to
con motivo de on the occasion of
con objeto de with the object of
con relación a in respect of/in relation to
con respecto a with respect/reference to/in comparison with
con rumbo a in the direction of (i.e. moving towards)
con vistas a with a view to
de regreso a on returning to
debajo de see 38.4, 35.6.6
delante de see 38.3, 35.7.5
dentro de see 35.6.5
después de after (time)
detrás de behind; see 38.21, 35.6.7
en base a see note 1
en busca de in search of
en caso de in case of
en concepto de as/by way of e.g. *este dinero es en concepto de ayuda* 'this money is by way of assistance'
en contra de against
en cuanto a as for/concerning
en forma de in the shape of
en honor de/a in honour of (but *en lugar de* instead of)
en medio de in the middle of
en pos de (literary) in search of (also = *tras de*)
en pro de (literary) = *a favor de*
en torno a around (the subject of)/concerning
en vez de instead of
en vías de on the way to: *país en vías de desarrollo* 'developing country', now often *país emergente*
en vísperas de on the eve of
en vista de in view of
encima de see 38.20
enfrente de opposite
fuera de see 35.6.5
lejos de far from
luego de after
más allá de beyond
por causa de = a causa de
por encima de over
por parte de on the part of
por razón de = a causa de
sin embargo de (literary) notwithstanding
so pena de (literary) = *bajo pena de*

39 Relative clauses and relative pronouns

The main topics discussed in this chapter are:

- Forms of relative pronouns and adjectives (Section 39.1.1)
- Definition of 'restrictive' and 'non-restrictive' relative clauses (Section 39.1.2)
- The uses of *que* as a relative pronoun (Section 39.2)
- Relative pronouns in non-restrictive relative clauses (Section 39.3)
- Relative pronouns after prepositions (Section 39.4)
- Remarks on individual relative pronouns and adjectives: *el cual* (39.5), *lo cual* and *lo que* (39.6), *cuyo* (39.7)
- *Donde*, *como* and *cuando* used to form relative clauses (Sections 39.10–12)
- The subjunctive in relative clauses (Section 39.15)

For word order in relative clauses see 42.2.

39.1 General

There are four relative pronouns and a relative adjective in Spanish: *que*, *quien*(*es*), *el que*, *el cual* and *cuyo*. These introduce relative clauses like the English relative pronouns 'that', 'who(m)', 'which' and 'whose' as in 'the book that I read', 'the woman that/who(m) we saw', 'the book that/which I'm talking about', 'students whose grades are satisfactory', etc.

(1) Important: Spanish relative pronouns and adjectives are *never* written with an accent.

39.1.1 Forms of relative pronouns and adjectives

Quien has a plural *quienes* but no separate feminine form. *Que* is invariable. *El que*, *el cual* and *cuyo* agree in number and gender, as follows:

	Singular	**Plural**
Masculine	*el que*	*los que*
	el cual	*los cuales*
	cuyo	*cuyos*
Feminine	*la que*	*las que*
	la cual	*las cuales*
	cuya	*cuyas*

(1) Agreement is with the noun referred to: *el bolígrafo con* ***el que*** *firmaron* 'the ballpoint pen they signed with', *las ruinas entre* ***las cuales*** *encontraron el amuleto* 'the ruins among which they found the amulet'.

(2) When it is used as a relative pronoun, *el que* is found after prepositions, e.g. *el restaurante en el que cenamos* 'the restaurant in which we had dinner'/'the restaurant we had dinner in' (it has other uses as a nominalizer, explained in Chapter 40).

(3) *Cuando*, *donde* and *como* may also introduce relative clauses: see 39.10–39.12 for discussion.

39.1.2 Restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses

This chapter uses the terms 'restrictive' and 'non-restrictive' relative clauses.

Restrictive clauses limit the scope of what they refer to: *no comimos las manzanas que estaban verdes* 'we didn't eat the apples that were unripe'. This refers only to the unripe apples and therefore implies that some were ripe.

Non-restrictive clauses do not limit the scope of what they refer to: *no comimos las manzanas, las cuales/que estaban verdes* 'we didn't eat the apples, which were unripe'. This sentence indicates that all the apples were unripe. More examples:

Restrictive relative clauses	**Non-restrictive relative clauses**
Don't buy a car that has faulty brakes	In some states there are rattle-snakes, which are poisonous and dangerous
You should read books that make you laugh	I love daffodils, which are my favourite flower
those students who passed the exam	the people of Iraq, who mostly speak Arabic
. . . only those men who are blond	those men, who all have blond hair

In writing, non-restrictive clauses are typically marked in both languages by a comma, and in speech by a pause – though they are not very common in speech. English does not allow the relative pronoun 'that' before non-restrictive relative clauses: 'water, *"that" (correctly 'which') is H_2O'.

A relative clause which refers to the whole of something unique is bound to be non-restrictive: *las pirámides egipcias, que/las cuales son uno de los monumentos más visitados por los turistas* 'the Egyptian pyramids, which are one of the monuments most visited by tourists'.

39.1.3 English and Spanish relative clauses compared

Spanish relative clauses differ from English in five important ways:

(**a**) modern English constantly separates prepositions from relative pronouns: 'the path (that/which) we were walking **along**'. This is never possible in Spanish: *el camino* ***por el que*** *caminábamos*. Sentences like **el camino que caminábamos por* are Spanglish. According to the *GDLE*, they are sometimes heard in Puerto Rico and the USA.

(**b**) A relative pronoun cannot be omitted in Spanish: 'the plane I saw' = *el avión* ***que*** (*yo*) *vi*. English constantly omits relative pronouns when they are the direct object of a verb, 'the girl I knew', 'the film they made', etc.

(**c**) English and French constantly express relative clauses by using a gerund: 'a box containing two books'/*une boîte contenant deux livres*. This is usually impossible or not recommended in Spanish: *una caja que contiene/contenía dos libros*. See 24.3.

(**d**) English constantly avoid relative clauses by using prepositions to join phrases: 'the shirt on the chair is mine' = *la camisa* ***que está*** *en la silla es mía*. This is often impossible in Spanish: see 38.1.4.

(**e**) Spoken English sometimes allows a relative pronoun to be separated by a verb phrase from what it refers to, as in ?'the man doesn't exist whom/that I'd want to marry', better 'the man (whom/that) I'd want to marry doesn't exist'. This cannot be translated by **el hombre no existe con el que/con quien yo quisiera casarme*. The correct equivalents are *no existe el hombre con el que/con quien yo quisiera casarme* or *el hombre con el que/con quien yo quisiera casarme no existe*. The first of these two translations is preferable, and this has consequences for the word order of Spanish sentences containing relative clauses. See 42.2.1 for discussion. Further examples:

Han vuelto las cigüeñas que hicieron su nido en el campanario el año pasado (not **las cigüeñas han vuelto que . . .*)	The storks that made their nest in the bell-tower last year have returned
Han regresado al país más de 900 mil mexicanos que vivían en Estados Unidos (*La Jornada*, Mex. Not **900 mil mexicanos han regresado al país que vivían en Estados Unidos*)	More than 900,000 Mexicans who were living in the USA have returned to the country

39.2 The relative pronoun *que*

Que is by far the most frequent relative pronoun and may be used in the majority of cases in restrictive clauses to translate the English relative pronouns 'who', 'whom', 'which' or 'that'. However, there are certain cases in which *el que*, *quien* or *el cual* are used, especially after prepositions. See 39.4 and 39.5 for further discussion. Examples of *que* as a relative pronoun:

los expertos que se equivocaron	the experts who got it wrong
las hojas que caían de las ramas	the leaves that were falling from the branches
el libro que compré ayer	the book (that) I bought yesterday
las enfermeras que contrataron el año pasado	the nurses (that/who(m)) they hired last year
Le decía a cada momento que era diferente a todos los hombres que había conocido (SP, Mex.)	She told him constantly that he was different to all the men she had known

(1) *Quien/quienes* are not used in restrictive clauses except after a preposition (see 39.4). Incorrect forms like **la chica quien viene*, **los hombres quienes dijeron eso* are often heard in the Spanish of English-speakers. *La chica que viene . . .* 'the girl who's/that's coming', *los hombres que dijeron eso*, 'the men who/that said that . . .' are the correct forms.

(2) In some colloquial sentences *que* can have a verb or verb phrase as its antecedent (see Glossary): *llovía que daba miedo* 'it was raining enough to scare you witless', *da unos cortes que lo deja a uno patidifuso* (Sp., colloquial; from *GDLE* 7.4.1.1) '(s)he comes out with some really embarrassing things that knock you sideways' (note singular form *deja*).

39.3 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**, *que*, *quien* or *el cual* may be used. *Quien* is nowadays used only for human beings, and *el cual* is emphatic and tends to be restricted to formal language (see 39.5 for discussion):

Fueron a hablar con José, que/quien/el cual estaba de buen humor	They went to talk to José, who was in a good mood
los Líderes Agropecuarios del Grupo Cairns, el cual incluye 18 países exportadores (advert., Arg.)	the leaders in Agriculture and Fisheries in the Cairns Group, which includes 18 exporting countries
Recibió la inesperada visita de su madre, la cual ahora se hacía llamar Rachel Smith (JV, Mex.)	He received the unexpected visit from his mother, who was now calling herself Rachel Smith
. . . algunos miembros del Consejo Nacional del PAN, quienes indignados comentaron . . . (AH, Mex.)	. . . some members of the National Council of the National Action Party, who remarked indignantly . . .,

El cual or *quien* is more likely to be used whenever the relative pronoun is separated from what it refers to or from the verb of which it is the subject or object, or after a heavy pause. *El cual* is discussed further at 39.5.

(1) 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* (FU, Sp.) '. . . and now, talking to her, who had the evening sun on her face', *él, que en el fondo es muy clase media* (MB, Ur.) 'he, who at heart is basically very middle-class . . .', *y ella, que apenas empezaba a disfrutar su popularidad, no se resignaba a perderla* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'and she, who was only just beginning to enjoy her popularity, was not disposed to lose it'.

(2) In 'cleft' sentences (discussed in Chapter 41) a nominalizer, e.g. *el que* or *quien*, must be used: *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', *dice que fue su marido quien lo mató* (AG, Sp., dialogue; or *el que*) 'she says it was her husband who killed him'.

(3) *El que* also translates 'the one who/which' and is discussed under nominalizers in Chapter 40: *aquella chica es Charo—la que lleva el chándal rojo* 'that girl over there is Charo – the one wearing the red tracksuit'. This is not a relative clause but a phrase in apposition (see Glossary). *El que* is used as a relative pronoun only after prepositions (see 39.4).

39.4 Relative pronouns after prepositions

39.4.1 After prepositions *el que, quien* or *el cual* are used

The relative pronouns required after a preposition are:

(**a**) **For non-human antecedents** (see Glossary): *el que* or *el cual*:

la amenaza de guerra bajo la que vivimos	the threat of war we're living under
la puerta tras la que se escondió	the door behind which (s)he hid
. . . comunicados en los que se recuerda la ilegalidad de las acciones propuestas (*Abc*, Sp.)	. . . communiqués recalling the illegality of the actions proposed
. . . una parte de su memoria . . . a la cual recurría con cada vez menos frecuencia (JV, Mex.)	. . . a part of his memory . . . which he accessed less and less
. . . como si fuera alguna enfermedad contra la cual había que vacunarse (EP, Mex.)	. . . as if it were some illness one had to get vaccinated against

(**b**) **For human antecedents**: *el que*, *quien* (or *el cual*). *Quien* is slightly more formal than *el que*:

Hay gente con la que la vida se ensaña (AM, Mex., or *con quien* or *con la cual*)	There are people that life has it in for
Todo el mundo sabe que el tipo al que detuvieron es un chivo expiatorio (MS, Mex., dialogue)	Everyone knows the guy they arrested is a scapegoat
el chico del que hablo/el chico de quien hablo	the boy I'm talking about

(1) If the gender of a human antecedent is unknown or irrelevant, the genderless *quien* is 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'.

(2) To refer to neuter words like *algo*, *nada* and *mucho*, *lo que* or *que* are used as relative pronouns: *no hay nada con* (*lo*) *que puedas sacarle punta* 'there's nothing you can sharpen it with', *esto es algo sobre lo que tenemos que reflexionar* (JCB, Sp.) 'this is something we have to reflect on', *si noto algo en lo que yo no deba estar* (EM, Mex., dialogue) 'if I notice something I shouldn't be mixed up in . . .'

(3) *Quien*(*es*) was often used for non-living antecedents before the eighteenth century, e.g. *un monasterio en quien era priora una su hermana* (*Don Quijote*) 'a convent in which a sister of his was prioress', nowadays *en el que* or *donde*, and *una hermana suya.*

(4) For the popular but stigmatized construction ?*la chica que fui con ella* for *la chica con la que fui,* see 39.8b.

(5) Historically *quien* had no plural – it descends from a Latin accusative singular form *quem* – and popular speech still sometimes uses the singular for the plural, e.g. *¿y todas esas con quien has salido?* (ABV, Sp., dialogue) '. . . and all those girls you've been out with?' (for *con quienes*).

(6) As we have said in this section, the relative pronoun *el que* normally appears after a preposition as in *el lápiz con el que lo escribiste* 'the pencil you wrote it with'. However, the *NGLE* 44.3o notes the occasional use before non-restrictive clauses and especially in Latin America of *el que* without a preposition, e.g. *ahogada en un mar de sellos y de rúbricas,* ***los*** *que se repiten . . .* 'drowning in a sea of rubber stamps and signatures that are repeated . . .', *su inglés, el que estudió en la escuela* 'his English, which he studied at school'. The more usual forms are *. . . de rúbricas, que se repiten*, *. . . su inglés, que estudió*.

39.4.2 The relative pronoun *que* after a preposition

Que without the definite article is preferred as a relative pronoun after the prepositions *a*, *con*, *de* and *en*, in certain circumstances difficult to define – as *GDLE* 7.5.1.3 acknowledges. This deletion of the definite article is almost always optional (*NGLE* 44.2e). It occurs most often when the antecedent (see Glossary) is definite, e.g. preceded by the definite article and particularly when it is an abstract noun:

(**a**) **After *a*** (when it is not personal *a*), after *con* and after *de*, except when the latter means 'from'. Use of *que* alone is especially common after abstract nouns:

la discriminación ***a que*** *están sometidas nuestras frutas y hortalizas* (*El País*, Sp.)	the discrimination which our fruits and vegetables are subject to
los litros de tónico capilar con que se bañaba la cabeza cada día (LS, Ch.)	the litres of hair tonic he bathed his head with every day
la generosidad de que hace alarde	the generosity (s)he boasts about
la aspereza con que la trataba (SP, Mex.)	the harshness with which he treated her

El/la/los/las que would be possible, though less elegant, in the preceding examples. In *la mujer a la que conoció en Santiago* 'the woman he met in Santiago' the *la* cannot be omitted because the *a* is personal *a*, but . . . *la mujer que conoció . . .*, without personal *a*, is possible.

(**b**) **Frequently, but optionally, 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/donde vivo* 'the house I live in', not *'the house "inside which" I live':

el desierto humano en que ella estaba perdida (FU, Sp.)	the human desert she was lost in
Me gustaría vivir en un sitio en que/ donde no hubiera/hubiese coches	I'd like to live in a place where there were no cars
las formas racionales en que se basa la vida social (MVLl, Pe.)	the rational forms on which social life is based
La obra en que sale se llama Muchacha del alma (EM, Mex., dialogue)	The play she's in is called 'My Best Girlfriend' (lit. 'Soul Girl')
Tenía días estupendos en que era desprendida y jovial (EM, Mex.)	She had really good days on which she was generous and good-humoured

(**c**) After periods of time. After *día*, *semana*, *mes*, *año*, *momento* the *en* is also often omitted.

el día que te vi	the day I saw you
el único día que se produjeron diferencias de importancia fue el jueves (*La Nación*, Arg.)	the only day on which any important differences were recorded was Thursday
el mes que llovió tanto	the month it rained so much
en los meses que estuvo Edwards en Cuba (MVLl, Pe.)	during the months Edwards spent in Cuba
Luego, en los pocos días que anduvo con la tropa villista (CF, Mex.)	Then, during the few days he was with Pancho Villa's troops

(1) If precise spatial location is intended *el/la/los/las que* is needed: *trenzó primero su melena en la que se le habían multiplicado las canas* (AM, Mex.) 'she first plaited her long hair, where grey/US gray hairs had multiplied'.

39.5 *El cual*

El cual can also be used after prepositions. In general, it is more formal than *el que* or *quien*: foreigners spoil much good Spanish by over-using it. But it may be preferred in the following contexts:

(**a**) After *según* when this word means 'according to' rather than 'depending on':

el argumento según el cual . . .	the argument according to which . . .
esa maldita tentación teológica que tienen los críticos literarios . . . según la cual los textos son como versiones actualizadas de la Biblia (JV, Mex.)	that accursed theological temptation that literary critics suffer from according to which texts are like updated versions of Bible

(**b**) After prepositions of more than one syllable like *para*, *sobre*, *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', *a consecuencia de* 'as a consequence of which', etc.:

. . . una formación profesional mediante la cual los funcionarios de grado medio estén capacitados para . . .	. . . professional training whereby middle-grade government employees will be equipped to . . .

However, *el que* is also found even after such prepositions:

. . . mi pobre y sucio uniforme de enfermero, sobre el que me había puesto un veterano jersey (LS, Sp.)	. . . my poor and dirty nurse's uniform, over which I had put an ancient jersey

(c) Important: *el cual* (or *quien* for humans) is favoured when the relative pronoun is separated from what it refers to by intervening words, or when the relative is separated from its verb:

un gran árbol, en cuyo tronco algunos muchachos vagos han pintado ciertas palabrotas u obscenidades, pero en ***el cual*** *no deja de circular la vida que proviene de la savia* (*La Prensa*, Nic.)	a large tree, on whose trunk some idle boys have painted certain swearwords or obscenities, but in which the life coming from the sap still flows
Fueron a hablar con su tío, un setentón de bigote blanco y acento andaluz, que hacía alarde de ideas muy avanzadas. ***El cual/ Quien*** *tras un largo silencio, contestó . . .*	They went to talk with his uncle, a seventy-year-old with a white moustache and an Andalusian accent who boasted of very advanced ideas. Who, after a long, silence, replied . . .

A statistical survey of spoken Spanish (DeMello 1994, 3) amply confirms this tendency.

(**d**) *El cual* is usual in the Spanish equivalents of phrases that in English require . . . 'of which/ whom', e.g. 'the majority of whom/which', 'some of whom/which', 'in the middle of which', 'on one side of which', 'the best of which', 'beneath which', etc.

los jóvenes españoles, la mayoría de los cuales son partidarios del divorcio	young Spaniards, the majority of whom are in favour of divorce
. . . los miles de galaxias de las cuales sólo éramos una más (EP, Mex.)	. . . the thousands of galaxies of which we were merely one more
muchos alumnos, entre los cuales había varias chicas	many students, among whom there were several girls

(1) A survey of the corpus of educated spoken Spanish by DeMello (1994 2), reveals that *el cual* is the favoured form after prepositions in spontaneous speech in Buenos Aires, Santiago de Chile, Lima, Bogotá and Caracas. *El que* was preferred in Mexico, Havana, Madrid and Seville. Nevertheless, *el cual* is often seen in the dialogue of Mexican novels, even in the speech of uneducated characters: *no habrá lugar en este mundo en el cual esté seguro* (GR, Mex., dialogue) 'there can't be a place in this world where I'd be safe'.

39.6 *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 very common. Compare: *Juan compró un traje nuevo que le gustó a su mujer* 'Juan bought a new suit that his wife liked' (restrictive) and *Juan compró un traje nuevo, lo que/lo cual le gustó a su mujer* 'Juan bought a new suit, which (i.e. the fact he bought it) she liked' (non-restrictive). Further examples:

En un primer momento se anunció que los misiles eran americanos, lo cual fue desmentido en Washington (*El País*, Sp.)	Initially it was stated that the missiles were American, which was denied in Washington
. . . altos índices de abstencionismo, lo cual siempre benefició al gobierno (AH, Mex.)	. . . high levels of abstention [in elections], which always favoured the Government
Es lo único que he hecho en mi vida de lo cual no he de arrepentirme (JV, Mex., dialogue)	It's the only thing I've done in my life that I won't have to regret

(1) For *lo que* as a nominalizer (= 'the thing that . . .') see 40.1.5.

39.7 *Cuyo* (relative adjective)

This translates 'whose': see 39.1.1 for its plural and feminine forms. It agrees in number and gender with the following noun, but if there is more than one noun it agrees only with the first: *un hombre cuy**as** manos y pies estaban quemados por el sol* 'a man whose hands and feet had been burnt by the sun'. More examples:

la Asamblea Constituyente, cuyos miembros serían elegidos en diciembre (GGM, Col)	the Constituent Assembly, whose members would be elected in December
la luz, cuya velocidad se mantiene constante sin importar desde donde se la observe (JV, Mex.)	light, whose speed remains constant regardless of from where it is observed
. . . un volumen en inglés cuyo título he olvidado (JM, Sp.)	. . . a volume in English whose title I've forgotten

(1) Important: although it is common in written Spanish, *cuyo* is rare in spontaneous speech. See 39.8c.

(2) Grammarians, including the Academy (*NGLE* 22.5m), condemn such sentences as ?*se alojó en el Imperial, en cuyo hotel había conocido a su primera mujer* 'he stayed at the Imperial, in which hotel he had met his first wife', better *. . . el Imperial, donde/hotel en el cual había conocido a su primera mujer*. But this construction occurs with *caso*, *circunstancia*(*s*), *motivo*, *fin* and a few other nouns: *se adoptará el sistema de 24 horas, en cuyo caso huelga añadir si se trata de la mañana o de la tarde* (*El País*, *Libro de estilo* 2014, 11.14) 'the 24-hour clock will be used, in which case it is unnecessary to add whether it is morning or afternoon', *se han registrado fuertes nevadas, por cuyo motivo la circulación está suspendida* 'heavy snowfalls have occurred, for which reason traffic is suspended'.

(3) *Del que/de quien* are occasionally used for *cuyo*, although this is criticized by Seco (1998), 143: *un torero, de quien alabó el tesón y el valor a toda prueba* (i.e. *cuyo tesón y valor a toda prueba alabó . . .*) 'a bullfighter, whose indefatigable steadfastness and courage he praised', *Alidio era un preso del que nunca se supo con exactitud su delito* (LMD, Sp., i.e. *cuyo delito nunca se supo . . .*) 'Alidio was a prisoner whose crime was never precisely known'.

(4) There used to be an interrogative form *cúyo*, but it is no longer used except in some local Latin American dialects, e.g. rural Colombia. One now says *¿de quién es esa mochila?* 'whose rucksack is that?', not **¿cúya mochila es esa/ésa?*

39.8 Relative clauses in familiar speech

Students will hear a number of popular or familiar constructions that should probably be left to native speakers.

(**a**) There is a colloquial tendency, which may sound uneducated, to insert a redundant pronoun in relative clauses: *dicen cosas que nadie* (*las*) *entiende* 'they say things no one understands'. See 14.10.5.

(**b**) Popular and very relaxed informal speech often avoids combining prepositions and relative pronouns by a type of construction banned from writing and rejected by grammarians:

?*en casa de una mujer que yo vivía con ella* (*con la que yo vivía*)	in the house of a woman I was living with
?*Te acuerdas del hotel que estuvimos el año pasado?* (*. . . en el que estuvimos . . .*)	Do you remember the hotel we stayed in last year?
?*Soy un emigrante que siempre me han preocupado los problemas de la emigración* (i.e. *. . . al que siempre han preocupado los problemas . . .*, letter in *El País*, Sp.)	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**) As we said before, *cuyo* is very rare and it is disappearing in spontaneous speech. The *GDLE* 15.5 says that it is virtually extinct in Mexico, and the same could probably be said of other countries, especially in the speech of young persons; but it is common in written Spanish everywhere. 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 recast as *las mujeres que tienen un marido que las ayuda en casa*.

(1) Popular speech constantly uses a construction called *quesuismo* which is stigmatized and rejected by the Academy (*NGLE* 22.5n): ?*los alumnos* ***que sus*** (for *cuyas*) *notas no están en la lista* (*cuyas notas no están . . .*) 'the students whose marks/grades are not on the list'. This construction quite often slips into educated speech, as DeMello (1992, 5), shows.

39.9 *Cartas a contestar* . . . , etc.

The following construction is nowadays quite common in journalism, official documents or business letters: *un libro y una tesis* ***a tomar*** *muy en serio por estudiosos y ciudadanos en general* (for *que deben ser tomados en serio . . .*) 'a book and a thesis to be taken very seriously by students and citizens in general'. See 22.13.

39.10 *Donde, adonde, en donde* before relative clauses

(a) ***Donde*** is commonly used as a relative adverb, 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':

Lo recogí en la calle donde te vi	I picked it up in the street where I saw you
Perquín, la ciudad donde impera la limpieza (*La Prensa*, ES)	Perquín, the city where cleanliness rules
Ese/Ése es el cajón de donde sacó los papeles	That's the drawer (s)he took the papers from
la Cámara de Diputados, donde la izquierda tenía mayoría (JA, Mex.)	The Chamber of Deputies, where the Left had a majority

In all the four examples, *el que* or *el cual* could be used with the appropriate preposition. However, in the following non-restrictive clause only *donde* is possible (just as 'where' is in English): *volvieron a encontrarse en París, donde se habían conocido veinte años antes* 'they met again in Paris, where they had met for the first time twenty years before'.

(b) ***Adonde*** is a relative adverb used before verbs of motion and it refers to some clearly identified place, e.g. *el pueblo adonde yo iba* (relative) 'the village I was going to', *Tacubaya, adonde ningún político, por mejor intencionado, dedicaría una mirada siquiera* (EP, Mex.) 'Tacubaya, at which no politician, however well intentioned, would even bother to glance'.

(c) ***A donde*** is an adverb used with verbs of motion when no noun of place appears, as in *fueron a donde no debían ir* 'they went where they shouldn't have gone'.

(d) ***Adónde*** is not a relative adverb: it is found in direct or indirect questions: *¿adónde va usted?* 'where are you going?', *¿adónde habrán ido rodando las pastillas de Optalidón?* (CMG, Sp.) 'where can the Optalidon tablets have rolled to?' (direct questions), and *cuídate mucho de no saber adónde vas porque puedes no llegar* (EM, Mex., dialogue) 'make absolutely sure you *don't* know where you're going because you might not get there'. In these cases *dónde* alone could have been used.

(e) ***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* (CRG, Sp.) 'there's a little store in Westwood where they sell a vast range of T-shirts with fantastic things written on them' (or *. . . Westwood donde venden . . .*), *los domingos se leía El Fígaro . . . en donde abundaban fotos de las bellas* (JA, Mex.) 'on Sundays they read *El Figaro . . .* in which there was an abundance of photos of beautiful women', literally. '*El Figaro* was read . . .'

(1) For *donde* meaning 'at the house of', see 28.9.

39.11 *Como* as a relative

Como occurs after *la manera* and *el modo*, although *en que* is nowadays more usual:

La manera como un país se fortalece y desarrolla su cultura es abriendo sus puertas y ventanas (MVLl, Pe.)	The way a country strengthens and develops its culture is by opening its doors and windows
No estoy desconsolado del modo en que se aplica esa palabra a quien ha sufrido una pérdida (JM, Sp.)	I'm not distraught in the way the word is used of people who have suffered a loss
Si Florencio se hubiera dado cuenta de la forma en que incidía en la vida de su hijo . . . (EP, Mex.)	If Florencio had realized the way he was impinging on his son's life . . .

39.12 *Cuando* before relative clauses

Cuando is used 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 los unicornios* 'even in our day, when no one believes in unicorns any more'; *vestida aún con la blusa blanca y la falda azul de la mañana cuando se encontró con Valentín Cobelo* (JRIG, Mex.) 'still dressed in the white blouse and blue skirt from the morning when she'd met Valentín Cobelo'. But *solamente puedo salir los días* (*en*) *que no trabajo* 'I can only go out on the days I'm not working' (restrictive clause).

(1) *Cuando* is used with *apenas*, *aún*, *todavía*, *entonces*, *no*, *no bien*: *apenas había aparcado el coche cuando se acercó un policía* '(s)he had hardly parked the car when a policeman came up', *aún/todavía no había empezado a estudiar cuando le dieron un empleo* '(s)he hadn't yet started studying when they gave him/her a job'. 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. English-speakers tend to say **en un año/día cuando . . .*

(2) *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 (s)he's finished', *cada vez que me mira* 'whenever (s)he looks at me', *de modo que/de manera que* 'so that'.

(3) In cleft sentences (see Chapter 41) *donde*, *como* or *cuando* may be obligatory and *que* disallowed, especially in European Spanish: *es así como hay que hacerlo* 'this is how it must be done' (not *. . . que hay que hacerlo*), *fue entonces cuando lo notó* 'it was then that (s)he noticed it' (not *entonces que lo notó . . .*).

39.13 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*. A noun must be used or, in written language, *aquel* is used. In other words, one cannot say **. . . vecinos de los a los que conocen* for '. . . neighbours of those they know'; either *. . . vecinos de la gente que conocen* or *. . . vecinos de aquellos a los que conocen*:

*Se imagina un nuevo don Julián, una versión moderna de **aquel al que** rinde homenaje el título del libro* (MVLl, Pe., not **el al que . . .*)	He imagines a new Don Julian, a modern version of **the one to whom** the book's title pays homage
Traiga otro plato, que no me gusta comer en los platos en los que han comido otros (spoken language; not **los en los que*)	Bring another plate – I don't like eating off those that others have eaten off

(1) *Ese/Este* cannot replace *aquel* in this construction: *los que/aquellos que suspendan en junio deberán presentarse de nuevo en septiembre* (from *GDLE* 14.3.1), not **esos/estos que . . .* 'those who fail in June must sit the examination again in September'.

39.14 Miscellaneous examples of relative clauses

Falta saber las condiciones en que está	We've yet to know what conditions (s)he's in
Falta saber en qué condiciones está	" "
Falta saber en las condiciones que está	" "
Según el cine a que vayas/Según al cine que vayas (examples from M. Moliner)	Depending on what cinema you go to
Era la habitación más pequeña en (*la*) *que jamás he estado*	It was the smallest room I've ever been in
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?	How does one explain the singular phenomenon of the liberals' victory?
el espectáculo conmovedor que son las ruinas de Machu Picchu	the moving spectacle of the Machu Picchu ruins

39.15 Subjunctive in relative clauses

In this section, nominalizers like *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 40.1.4. See 20.5.8 for *dondequiera*.

39.15.1 Subjunctive in relative clauses that refer to something not yet identified

Important: Spanish uses the subjunctive in these 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 clear: contrast *voy a estudiar una carrera que me guste* 'I'm going to study a degree course that I like' (you haven't found one yet) and *que me gusta* (you have already chosen one); *busco un médico que sepa acupuntura* 'I'm looking for a doctor (i.e. 'any doctor') who knows acupuncture', *conozco a un médico que sabe acupuntura* 'I know a doctor who knows acupuncture'. Further examples:

Haz lo que quieras	Do whatever you like
Necesitamos a alguien que esté en el local	We need somebody who'll be on the spot
Cualquier reacción que uno pueda tener suena a sobreactuado (CRG, Sp.)	Any reaction one might have sounds like overacting/sounds overdone
¿Sabes de alguien que tenga apellido en este país? (ES, Arg., dialogue)	Do you know anyone in this country who has a surname (i.e. a famous name)
Dígame qué tienen que esté muy sabroso (JI, Mex., dialogue)	Tell me what you've got that tastes really good
¿Has traído todos los libros que nos hagan falta? (*. . . nos hacen falta* suggests that you have certain books in mind)	Have you brought all the books we may need?
Buscó una zona donde el mar llegara debilitado (MVM, Sp.)	He looked for an area where the sea was coming in with less force
Iremos a donde tú decidas (JV, Mex., dialogue)	We'll go anywhere you decide

(1) Sometimes a subjunctive introduces or reinforces the idea of' 'any': *un PC que no **tenga** muchos gigabytes de RAM no vale la pena* 'any PC (personal computer) that doesn't have many gigabytes of RAM isn't worth the trouble'. The indicative would have been possible here.

(2) In literary styles, the subjunctive is common in relative clauses when the main clause is introduced by *como* 'like': *. . . como un joven impertinente que arrancara la peluca a una solterona* (ES, Mex.) 'like a cheeky youngster pulling off some elderly spinster's wig'.

(3) However, sensitive native speakers will accept the following sentences, quoted in the *NGLE* 25.10d: *he de buscar a la persona que **tiene** las llaves* 'I've got to look for the person who's got the keys' (person not yet identified), *la hipotética máquina que **traduce** correctamente de una lengua a otra sin ayuda del hombre sigue siendo hoy un mero proyecto* 'the hypothetical machine that translates accurately from one language to another without human aid is still a mere project today' (refers to a non-existent machine), *este año solo/sólo he leído una novela que **tuviera** verdadero valor literario* 'I've only read one novel this year that had any real literary value' (the novel exists despite the subjunctive).

It seems that the acceptability of such sentences depends partly on geographical region, and the rules given in 39.15 could have been applied in all of them. Foreign learners will do well to abide by the rules given in this section since a sentence like **conozco a un chico que **sepa** vasco* (for *sabe vasco . . .*) 'I know a boy who knows Basque' is absolutely incorrect.

(4) French also uses the subjunctive when the antecedent is not yet identified: *queremos comprar una casa que* ***tenga*** *piscina = nous voulons acheter une maison qui* ***ait*** *une piscine* 'we want to buy a house that has a swimming pool' (i.e. if we can find one).

39.15.2 Subjunctive after *cualquiera que, quienquiera* (*que*) 'anyone who'

The same rule applies to these words since they refer to something not yet identified.

Cualquiera que te vea pensará que vas a una fiesta	Anyone who sees you will think you're going to a party
El obstáculo más inmediato para quienquiera que esté en el poder es recuperar la gobernabilidad de este país fracturado (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	The most immediate obstacle for anyone who is in power is making this broken country [Brazil] governable again

(1) If 'anyone who . . .' means 'those who . . .', 'people who . . .', a nominalizer (*el/la/los/las que* or *quien/quienes*) with the subjunctive is used: *el que/quien se crea eso está loco* 'anyone who believes that is mad'. *Quienquiera . . .* is also found: Seco (1998, 378), says that it is exclusively literary in Spain, but it survives elsewhere in ordinary speech: *quienquiera se crea eso está loco* (GCI, Cu., dialogue; Spain *el que crea . . .* or *quien crea . . .*; also *quienquiera que . . .*), *pregunta ¿en qué puedo servirle? a quienquiera que entre* (DT, Mex., dialogue) 'he asks anyone who comes in "how can I help you?"'

(2) *Quienquiera que sea* 'whoever it is' seems to alternate freely with the *forma reduplicativa* (see 20.5): *si alguien cometió un crimen, que responda ante la ley, sea quien sea* (*El Economista*, Mex., or *quienquiera que sea*) 'if someone committed a crime let them answer before the law, whoever it is', *íntimo amigo del Jefe del Gobierno, fuera el que fuese* (MVM, Sp., or *quienquiera que fuera/fuese*) 'a close friend of the Head of the Government, whoever the latter happened to be'.

39.15.3 Subjunctive in relative clauses that refer to non-existent things

If the relative clause refers to something that does not exist, the subjunctive must be used:

No hay nadie que sepa tocar más de un violín a la vez	There is no one who can play more than one violin at the same time
Jamás la oí hablar de algo que mereciera la pena (SP, Sp., dialogue)	I never heard her talk about anything worthwhile
¿Sabes algo que yo no sepa? (EM, Mex., dialogue)	Do you know something I don't know?
¿A quiénes conoces que se vean feas esperando un hijo? (AM, Mex., dialogue; *se vean = estén* in Spain)	Who do you know who looks ugly when they're expecting a baby?

(1) French has a similar rule: *il n'y a personne qui* ***puisse*** *= no hay nadie que* ***pueda*** 'there is no one who can . . .'

39.15.4 Subjunctive in relative clauses when the main verb is in the future tense

The subjunctive is used in relative clauses when the main clause refers to the future:

Seré yo el que tenga que solucionar mis propios problemas (cf. *soy yo el que tengo/ tiene que solucionar . . .*)	I'll be the one who has to solve my own problems
No será hasta el primer Consejo de Ministros cuando el Gobierno apruebe el proyecto de ley (*La Vanguardia*, Sp.)	It won't be until the first Council of Ministers (Brit. 'Cabinet meeting') that the Government will approve the draft law
Pero serán las investigaciones las que determinen qué fue lo que sucedió (*El Diario de Hoy*, ES)	But the police investigation will discover what happened

39.15.5 Subjunctive in relative clauses after superlative expressions

The subjunctive may appear in relative clauses following superlative statements, but it is less usual in everyday written or spoken language:

el mayor incendio que jamás se ha/haya visto	the greatest fire ever seen
la mayor transacción con divisas fuertes que se haya hecho en el Río de la Plata (ES, Arg.)	the largest hard-currency transaction ever made in the River Plate region
lo más hermoso que haya visto en mi miserable vida (EM, Mex., dialogue)	the most beautiful thing I've ever seen in my miserable life

Compare these less literary examples:

Eres la chica más simpática que ***he*** *conocido*	You're the most likeable girl I've ever met
Yo debía ser el extranjero más inteligente que madame Forestier había visto en su vida (ABE, Pe.)	I must have been the most intelligent foreigner Madame Forestier had seen in her life
Dijo que era la mayor barbaridad que a nadie se le había ocurrido (or *hubiera/hubiese*)	(S)he said it was the greatest stupidity anybody had ever thought of

(1) The indicative is normal in positive sentences after words like 'first', 'only': *es la primera vez que se habla de esto* 'it's the first time people have talked about this', *es la única película que ha hecho* 'it's the only film (s)he's made'. However, if the main verb is in the future, the subordinate verb will be in the subjunctive: *será la primera vez que se hable de esto* 'it'll be the first time it's talked about'; see 39.15.4.

(2) Where the subjunctive is possible it makes the statement more emphatic: *¡eres la persona más generosa que haya conocido en toda mi vida!* 'you're the most generous person I've met in my whole life!'

(3) French differs from Spanish in requiring the subjunctive after almost all superlative statements and after 'only': *elle est la seule personne qui* ***comprenne*** *le chinois = es la única persona que entiende chino* 'she's the only person who understands Chinese'.

40 Nominalizers

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- *el de*, *la de*, *los de*, *las de* (= 'the one(s) from . . .') (Section 40.1.2)
- *lo de* (Section 40.1.3)
- *el que*, *la que*, *los que*, *las que* ('the one(s) that . . .') (Section 40.1.4)
- *lo que* (Section 40.1.5)
- *quien/quienes* when it means 'the person(s) who . . .' (Section 40.1.6)

40.1 Nominalizers

40.1.1 General

Nominalizers are words that turn other words or phrases into noun phrases: ***los que*** *interrogan* 'those who interrogate' is close in meaning to *los interrogadores* 'the interrogators', ***la de*** *antes* 'the one (fem.) from before' to *la anterior* 'the previous one', ***quien*** (no accent) *es inteligente* 'the one who is intelligent' roughly means *la persona inteligente* 'the intelligent person', etc.

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 39.3–4. For *quién* in questions, see 28.5. For *el que* + subjunctive meaning 'the fact that' (= *el hecho de que*), see 20.3.19.

40.1.2 *El de, los de, la de, las de*

'The one(s) belonging to', 'that/those of', 'the one(s) from', etc., French *celui de*, *celle de*, *ceux de*, *celles de*. *El de* agrees in number and gender with the noun it refers to:

De los alumnos, los de cuarto son los mejores	Of the students, the fourth-year are the best
—¿Quién ha venido? —Las de siempre	'Who's come?' 'The same women/girls as usual'
Así que eres la de la droguería . . . (SP, Sp., dialogue)	So you're the girl from the drugstore . . .
Espera cotejar el ADN de los restos hallados con los del familiar enterrado (Granma, Cu.)	She hopes to compare the DNA from the remains discovered with those of the buried family member
Sus manos parecían las de otro hombre (EP, Mex.)	His hands looked like those of another man
la industria del petróleo y la del carbón	the oil and coal industries

Translation by a Saxon genitive (i.e. apostrophe *s*) or by a compound noun is sometimes the solution:

Quita los de ayer y pon los de hoy	Take away yesterday's and put today's
Necesitaba llorar en el hombro de alguien, así fuera en el de su peor enemiga (ES, Mex. Spain: *aunque fuera/fuese . . .*)	She needed to cry on someone's shoulder, even if it was her worst female enemy's

(1) Important: *de* is the only preposition that can follow *el/la/los/las*. Mistakes like **los con coche* 'those with cars', **la para María* 'the one (e.g. *carta*) for Maria' are not Spanish. One says *los que tienen coche*, *la que es para María*, etc.

(2) *La de* can mean 'the amount of'/'how many' in colloquial language: *no sé la de temas que tengo apuntados* (CMG, Sp.) 'I don't know how many topics I've got jotted down', *me recordó la de veces que me he reído* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'he reminded me how many times I've laughed . . .' See also 3.2.30.

40.1.3 *Lo de*

This is the neuter version of *el de*. Like all neuter pronouns, it must be used if there is no gendered noun or pronoun to which it can refer, otherwise *el/la/los/las de* must be used. It is invariable in form.

Lo de often means 'the business/affair of . . .' in such phrases as *lo del dinero perdido* 'the affair of the lost money':

Siempre está a vueltas con lo de que cuándo nos vamos a casar	(S)he's always going on about when we're going to get married
De lo de la abuela poco les debe quedar (CMG, Sp.)	They must have very little left of grandma's things/money
Eso es lo de menos	That's the *least* problem
Todo lo del maldito telegrama se me vino a la memoria (ABE, Pe.)	The whole business of the damned telegram came into my mind
¿Le cuento lo de los otros tres novios? (ES, Mex., dialogue)	Should I tell you about the other three boyfriends?

(1) *Lo de* is used in the Southern Cone and Bolivia to mean '. . .'s house', cf. *de camino, pasá por lo de Paula Limorgui y decile a Sofi que venga a más tardar a las siete para cambiarse* (CP, Arg., dialogue) 'on the way call in at Paula Limorgui's house and tell Sofi to come at seven at the latest to get changed' (Sp. *pasa por la casa de Paula . . . y dile a Sofi*).

40.1.4 *El/la/los/las que*

This translates 'the one(s) who/which', 'that/those which', etc. (Fr. *celui/celle/ceux/celles qui/que*). It agrees in number and gender with the noun it replaces:

la que está fuera	the one (fem.) who/that is outside/away
el que llegó ayer	the one (masc.) who/that arrived yesterday
los que dicen eso	the ones/those (masc.) who say that
Pobre de la que se case contigo (EP, Mex., dialogue)	Poor woman who marries you . . .
Yo no soy el que fui (JM, Sp., dialogue)	I'm not the man/person I was
Me atraían las que le tuvieron cariño, las que incluso le parieron hijos (AM, Mex., dialogue)	I felt drawn to those women who had been fond of him, even the ones who had borne his children

(1) *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*, Sp.) 'freedom in television should always belong to the person watching it, not to the person programming it'.

(2) *La que* is often used on both continents instead of *lo que* in humorous warnings: *no sabes la que te espera* 'you don't know what's waiting for you . . .', *mira en la que te metiste* (CF, Mex., dialogue) 'look at the mess you've got into . . .', *pobre Narciso, en la que se ha metido por ser tan buena gente con su patrón* (MVLl, Pe., dialogue) 'poor Narciso, the mess he's got into from being so nice to his boss'.

40.1.5 *Lo que*

The invariable 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. Fr. *ce qui/ce que*):

Lo que más me gusta es cuando haces versos (CMG, Sp., dialogue)	What I like best is when you make up verses/poems
Octavia, un hombre es lo que siente (ABE, Pe., dialogue)	Octavia, a man is what he feels
Cruzaron lo que parecía un pueblo fantasma (MS, Mex.)	They passed through what seemed like a ghost town
Se prolonga todo lo que da de sí la vista	It stretches as far as the eye can see
Me pasa lo que a ti	The same thing's happening to me as to you

(1) 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** (i.e. the issue/problem) they fought over'.

(2) *Cuanto* can be used as an equivalent of *todo lo que* 'everything that . . .': *te crees cuanto te dicen* = *te crees todo lo que te dicen* 'you believe everything they tell you'.

40.1.6 *Quien/quienes* as an equivalent of 'the one(s) who'

Quien/quienes (no accent, but see note 2) 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', as in *no tengo con quien hablar* 'I've got no one to talk to':

Quien/El que diga eso es un cobarde (*quien* is slightly more literary)	The person who says that is a coward
Quienes/Los que no estén de acuerdo, que se vayan	Anyone not in agreement should go
Quien no es mala persona es el sargento	Someone who's not a bad guy is the sergeant
El coronel no tiene quien le escriba (GGM, Col.; *el que* impossible here)	The colonel has no one to write to him
Escuchaba sin oír las conversaciones de quienes se cruzaban con nosotros (SP, Sp.)	He listened absent-mindedly (lit. 'without hearing') to the conversations of the people walking past us
No saludaba a personas que no eran quienes decían ser (CF, Mex.)	He didn't say hello to people who weren't who they claimed to be
Cada quien tiene sus ritos (AM, Mex.)	Everyone has different rites/rituals

(1) *Quien/quienes* cannot be used when the identity or sex of the person referred to is known and emphasized: *lo/le vimos con la que vive al lado* 'we saw him with the girl/woman who lives next door' (not **lo/le vimos con quien vive al lado*).

(2) A common colloquial construction is *tú no eres quién para decirme eso* 'you're no one to tell me that'/'who are you to tell me that?' See 28.5 note 3 for the accent on *quién* in this construction.

(3) Note the phrase *hay quien*(*es*): *hay quien prefiere la paella sin mejillones* 'some people like paella without mussels', *hay quien dice que . . .* 'some people say that . . .', *hay quienes no reciben ni el salario mínimo* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'there are some who don't even get the minimum wage'.

41 Cleft sentences

The main points discussed in this chapter are:

- Definition of 'cleft' sentences (Section 41.1)
- Cleft sentences of the type 'it was X that said it', etc. (Section 41.2)
- Cleft sentences involving prepositions or adverbs, e.g. 'it was here that it happened' (Section 41.3)
- Translating 'that's why . . .' (Section 41.4)
- Verb agreement in cleft sentences: (Section 41.5)

41.1 General

41.1.1 Definition of 'cleft sentences'

'Cleft sentences' are called by the Academy *construcciones* or *fórmulas relativas de relieve*, or *construcciones copulativas enfáticas* (*NGLE* 44.7e). They are sentences in which one of the elements is focused by using 'to be'/*ser*. This can be done in one of several ways:

Simple sentence	**Cleft sentence**
The fire started here	It was here that the fire started This is where the fire started Here was where the fire started
John said it	It was John who said it John was/is the one who said it The one who said it was/is John
I cut it with this knife	It was this knife I cut it with This is the knife I cut it with This knife is the one I cut it with
I like sausages	What I like is sausages Sausages are what I like
I realized then	It was then that I realized

The structure of cleft sentences differs in Spanish from their French and English counterparts, and there are important differences between European and Latin-American usage with respect to cleft sentences containing prepositions.

41.1.2 Tense agreement in cleft sentences

In cleft sentences the tense of the verbs is normally the same: ***fue*** *aquí donde la* ***vi*** 'it was here that I saw her', ***ha sido*** *aquí donde la* ***he visto*** (same meaning, but perfect of recency), *era aquí donde la veía* 'it was here that I used to see her'. One should not, for example, say *****era*** *aquí donde la* ***vi***, although *es aquí donde la vi* 'it is here that I saw her' is allowed and, according to *NGLE* 40.11j is equivalent to *fue aquí donde la vi*.

(1) Important: when *ser* is in the future or conditional tense, the other verb is usually in the present subjunctive form: *seré yo quien tenga que solucionarlo* 'it'll be me who has to solve it'. See 39.15.4.

41.2 'She is the one who . . . ', etc.

English-speakers, especially those who know French, are tempted to link this type of cleft sentence by the word *que*, but only a nominalizer, i.e. *el que* or *quien* for humans can be used. *Lo que* must be used to refer to a genderless word or phrase:

Es este libro ***el que*** *compré*	It's this book that I bought
Este libro es ***el que*** *compré*	This book's the one that I bought
Fueron esas chicas ***las que/quienes*** *lo hicieron*	They were the girls who did it
Esas chicas fueron ***las que/quienes*** *lo hicieron*	Those girls were the ones who did it
Esto es ***lo que*** *más rabia me da*	This is what makes me most furious
Lo que *más rabia me da es esto*	What makes me most furious is this
Porque nunca es ella la que aporta el dinero	Because it's never her who brings in the money
Eres tú el que no me entiende (JMa, Sp., dialogue)	*You're* the one who doesn't understand me
Nosotros nos ocupamos de él. Es él quien no sabe ocuparse de sí mismo (CF, Mex., dialogue)	We look after him. He's the one who can't look after himself
El pelaje overo es el que prefieren los ángeles (JLB, Arg.)	Lamb's fleece is the one that angels prefer

(1) Important: the use of *que* on its own in this type of sentence produces bad Spanish like **fue él que me dijo* for *fue él quien/el que me dijo* 'it was he who told me', **fue esto que* (or even ***qué*) *descubrió Darwin* for the correct *fue esto lo que descubrió Darwin/esto fue lo que descubrió Darwin* 'this is what Darwin discovered'.

The accented forms *quién*, *qué*, *cuál*, *dónde*, *cómo*, are never used to join cleft sentences.

41.3 Cleft sentences involving prepositions or adverbs

(**a**) **Important**: if the first half of a Spanish cleft sentence contains a preposition, the preposition must normally be repeated in the second half: Spanish says 'it's **with** her **with** whom you must speak' *es* ***con*** *ella* ***con*** *la que/con quien tienes que hablar*; ***del*** *que más se hablaba era* ***de*** *David Siqueiros* (EP, Mex.) 'the person most talked about was David Siqueiros', ***por*** *lo que más se distinguía era* ***por*** *su incansable afición a molestar* (SP, Sp.) 'what most distinguished him was his tireless fondness of being a nuisance', *era* ***para*** *esto* ***para*** *lo que he tenido que esperar tanto* (J. Ma, Sp., dialogue) 'it was for this that I've had to wait so long'.

However, when the cleft sentence begins with *ser*, informal Latin-American Spanish (especially in the Southern Cone) often uses *que* alone in a way similar to the French *que* or to the English 'that'; this *que* is called by grammarians the *que galicado* or 'Frenchified *que*'. It is vehemently rejected by many Spaniards, although it is heard increasingly among younger generations in Spain:

Sp. *Es desde esta ventana desde donde se ve el mar*; Lat. Am. . . . *desde esta ventana que se ve el mar*	It's from this window that you can see the sea

Desde esta ventana es desde donde se ve el mar	This window is where you can see the sea from
Sp. *Fue por eso por lo que cambió de empleo* Lat. Am. *Fue por eso que cambió de empleo*	That was why (s)he decided to change job
Pero es con la Maga que hablo (JC, Arg., dialogue; Sp. . . . *con la que/con quien hablo*)	But it's Maga I'm talking to
No fue por el champagne que vine aquí día tras día (SP, Mex. Sp. *por lo que . . . champaña* or *champán*)	It wasn't because of the champagne that I came here day after day

(**b**) **Important**: if the first part of a cleft sentence contains an adverb or adverbial phrase of time, place or manner it must be joined to the second part by *cuando*, *donde* or *como* respectively, although Latin Americans may use *que* if the cleft sentence begins with *ser*, especially in informal speech: Lat. Am. *fue ahí que la vi*, Sp. *fue ahí donde la vi* 'that's where I saw her/you/it'. See note 4 for details.

Fue en casa de ella que tuvo lugar aquel encuentro con Vallejos (MVLl, Pe., Sp. . . . *donde tuvo lugar*)	It was in her house that that meeting with Vallejos took place
Sp. and Lat. Am. *Así es como hay que hacerlo*	This is how you have to do it
Fue entonces cuando comenzó la historia del automóvil (*El País*, Sp.)	It was then that the history of the car began
Fue entonces que se preguntó y planteó a cientos de personas presentes: ¿pero somos también un país de lectores? (*La Jornada*, Mex. Sp. *entonces cuando . . .*)	It was then that hundreds of the persons present were asked and challenged: are we also a nation of readers?

(1) If the original sentence contained *lo que* this neuter pronoun is retained in the cleft sentence: *lo que me sorprende es su timidez* > *su timidez es lo que me sorprende* 'his/her shyness is what surprises me', *es la inseguridad lo que lo/le hace reaccionar de esa forma* 'it's insecurity that makes him react like that', *ha hecho cine, teatro, televisión, pero es con la canción con lo que le gustaría triunfar* 'he has worked in cinema, theatre and TV, but it is in singing that (s)he would like to succeed'.

(2) *Lo que* is used when the thing referred to is non-specific. *Era un traje negro lo que llevaba* 'it was a black suit that (s)he was wearing' answers the question '*what* was (s)he wearing?', but *el que llevaba era el traje negro/era el traje negro el que llevaba* 'the one (s)he was wearing was the black suit' is an answer to '*which suit* (*el traje*, masc.) was (s)he wearing?'

(3) 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 is the mosquitoes that annoy him'. In Spanish *ser* normally remains plural in such cleft sentences (especially in Spain): *lo que me irrita son los mosquitos* 'it **is** the mosquitoes that annoy me/what annoys me is the mosquitoes', ***son*** *los mosquitos lo que me irrita* 'the mosquitoes are what annoys me'. See 2.3.3 for more on this construction.

If a preposition follows *ser*, the latter is singular: ***es*** *de ellos de quienes no me fío* 'they're the ones I don't trust'.

(4) The standard construction with repeated pronouns is often used in Latin America in formal styles, cf. *es por lo anterior por lo que nos gusta la idea de Ecopetrol* (*El Tiempo*, Col.) 'it is because of the previous point that we like the idea of Ecopetrol'. The construction with *que* alone seems to be more acceptable in writing in Argentina than elsewhere. The *GDLE*, 27.3.8, notes that the construction with repeated pronouns is usual in Mexico, but cf. *fue por ese infundio* ***que*** *Rodolfo me*

quiso sacar del ambiente artístico (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'it was because of that baseless rumour that Rodolfo wanted to get me out of the show-business world'.

41.4 Translating 'that's why'

Por eso is the simplest construction and avoids a cleft sentence: *por eso decidieron ir a París* 'that's why they decided to go to Paris'.

A more complicated alternative involves the phrase *por eso* + *ser*, or *ser* + *por eso*. This generates a cleft sentence:

*Es también por eso **por lo que** se traiciona a cualquiera* (JM, Sp.)	That's also why one betrays anyone
Fue por eso por lo que me quedé en casa	That's why I stayed at home

But Latin Americans may simply use *por eso que*, a construction rejected in Spain: *es por eso que no se había casado* (AM, Mex.)'That's why she hadn't got married' (Spain. . . . *por lo que no se había casado*).

(1) Important: *porque* means 'because' and it cannot be used to translate sentences like 'she's got the flu, **that's why** she's stayed at home'. A construction with *por* is called for: *tiene gripe, por eso se ha quedado en casa/por eso es por lo que se ha quedado en casa* '(s)he's got the flu, that's why she's stayed at home'. A common mistake among English-speaking students is *. . . *eso es porque se ha quedado . . .* French is like English in this respect: *et c'est pourquoi elle est restée chez elle*.

41.5 Verb agreement in cleft sentences

The best rule for foreign learners is to make the verb agree in person and number with the subject of *ser*, *tú **fuiste** el que lo/le **viste*** 'you're the one who saw him'. Strict agreement seems to be required in the plural: *vosotros fuisteis los que lo/le visteis/ustedes fueron los que lo vieron* 'you were the ones who saw him'. However, in the singular, Spanish often uses third-person agreement, i.e. *tú fuiste el que lo/le **vio***. The following examples reveal some of the uncertainty surrounding this question:

Yo fui la que se lo bebió/la que me lo bebí	I was the one (fem.) who drank it
Soy yo quien no se soporta a sí misma (JMa, Sp., dialogue)	It's me (fem.) who can't stand myself
Ahora eres tú la que habla como cuento de ciencia ficción (MC, Mex., dialogue)	Now it's you (fem.) who's talking like a science fiction story
Fui yo finalmente quien la convencí (GCI, Cu., dialogue)	It was me who eventually convinced her
La que te equivocas, como casi siempre, eres tú (AG, Sp., dialogue; or *que se equivoca*)	The one who's making a mistake, as almost always, is you
*Vos sos el que no me aguant**a**. Vos sos el que no aguant**ás** a Rocamadour* (JC, Arg. dialogue; both constructions used. Sp. *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
Somos los únicos que no tenemos ni un centavo para apostar (GGM. Col. dialogue; not '*tienen*')	We're the only ones who haven't got a centavo to bet

(1) When the nominalizer is the first element in the sentence, either option is possible: *el que tengo/tiene que hacerlo soy yo* 'I'm the one who has to do it', *los que tienen/tenéis que trabajar más sois vosotros* (Lat. Am., *tienen . . . son ustedes*) 'you're the ones who have to work harder'.

(2) In reflexive sentences, third-person agreement is usual: *eres tú el que siempre se afeita con máquina* 'you're the one who always shaves with a shaver', not *. . . te afeitas . . .* (*NGLE* 40.11i).

42 Word order

The main subjects discussed in this chapter are:

- General remarks on Spanish and English word order (Section 42.1)
- Verb-Subject-Object order in sentences containing relative clauses (Section 42.2.1–3)
- Word order in questions and exclamations (Section 42.3)
- *—Gracias —dijo Juan* (not *—Juan dijo*) (Section 42.4)
- Verb-Subject order after adverbials (Section 42.5)
- Miscellaneous word order rules (Section 42.7)
- The position of adverbs and adverbial phrases (Section 42.8)
- Sentences like *tonta no es*, *dinero tiene*, etc. (Section 42.9.1)
- *Viene el profesor* or *el profesor viene*? (Section 42.9.2)
- *Ana leyó el libro*, *el libro lo leyó Ana*, etc. (Section 42.9.3)

42.1 Spanish word order: general

Word order is a subject that defies brief explanation in any language and especially in Spanish, so the account given in this chapter is simplified. Readers who need more information should consult such topics as *orden de palabras*, *dislocación*, *extraposición*, *foco*, *inversión del sujeto* and *tema* in the Academy's *GDLE*.

This chapter mentions the most obvious differences between Spanish and English word order. We are here discussing only plain twenty-first and late twentieth-century Spanish prose. In poetry, poetic prose and texts from earlier periods word order can be much freer.

42.1.1 Flexibility of Spanish word order

Compared with English and French, Spanish word order is fairly variable. One can say *en el pasado remoto* or *en el remoto pasado* 'in the remote past': see 5.10. *Juan vuelve* and *vuelve Juan* 'Juan's coming back' are both possible with a difference of emphasis; see 42.9.2. An object may follow or precede the verb: *no tengo hambre* 'I'm not hungry', but *hambre no tengo*; see 42.9.1. As in English, adverbs and adverbial phrases may occupy various positions in a sentence: *a veces llueve/llueve a veces* 'sometimes it rains'/'it rains sometimes'; see 42.5 and 42.8. This list is not exhaustive.

This chapter assumes that the normal and most usual word order in Spanish sentences is Subject-Verb-(Object), e.g. *Carolina contestó* 'Carolina answered' *Mario no reconoció a los demás* 'Mario didn't recognize the rest of them', while other arrangements of Verb, Subject and Object are departures from this norm. e.g. *contestó Carolina*, *a los demás Mario no los reconoció*

42.1.2 A fundamental difference between Spanish and English

Important: spoken English relies heavily on stress to focus or emphasize words. Consider the differences between 'I'm going to school' (neutral sentence), '***I'm*** going to school' (even if you aren't), 'I ***am*** going to school' (you said I wasn't), 'I'm ***going*** to school' (no need to tell me again),

'I'm going ***to*** school' (not coming back), 'I'm going to ***school'*** (not somewhere else). When used in Spanish these English stress patterns can sound very foreign. This kind of emphasis can play a part in Spanish – see 42.9 – but Spanish tends to use different sentence patterns or word orders to achieve the same effect: *voy al colegio*, *yo voy al colegio*, *pero sí voy al colegio*, *al colegio es adonde voy*, etc.

42.1.3 A note on Subject-Verb-Object word order

Important: this order is most common when the direct object is a noun or noun phrase: *Jorge vendió su coche* 'Jorge sold his car', *los rusos han lanzado una sonda a Venus* 'the Russians have launched a probe to Venus'. But if the noun is replaced by unstressed object pronouns, the order becomes Subject-Object-Verb: *Jorge **lo** vendió* 'Jorge sold it', *los rusos la han lanzado* 'the Russians have launched it'.

42.2 Word order in sentences containing relative clauses

This section explains an extremely frequent departure from the usual Subject-Verb word order.

42.2.1 Verb-Subject order in the main clauses

In a sentence like ***compró la casa un señor*** *que había vivido en Florida* 'a man who had lived in Florida bought the house', the words in bold are the main clause, and the rest is a relative clause.

Verb-Subject order is preferred in Spanish in the main clause in order to keep the relative pronoun close to the subject of the main verb – in the previous example *un señor* is the subject of the main verb. For this reason, the following is very bad Spanish: **un señor compró la casa que había vivido en Florida*, which breaks the strong rule (also mentioned at 39.1.3e) that a verb phrase (*compró la casa*) 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.

Another order in Spanish that is more familiar to English speakers is also allowed, e.g. *un señor que había vivido en Florida compró la casa*, *el coche que yo quiero comprar no existe todavía*. This order is often perfectly acceptable – as in these two cases – but it may be awkward when the subject is separated from its verb by many words. *Tienen suerte las mujeres cuyo marido siempre las ayuda en casa* 'women whose husbands always help them in the house are lucky', is better than the typical 'English' order *las mujeres cuyo marido siempre las ayuda en casa tienen suerte.* Spanish dislikes leaving verbs dangling at the end of a sentence.

Likewise *me llama una chica que se llama América* (CRG, Sp., dialogue) 'a girl called América rings/calls me' is better than *una chica que se llama América me llama*; but the latter is acceptable if the verb – in this case *llama* – does not come last in the sentence, as in *una chica que se llama América me llama para pedirme un favor* or *me llama una chica que se llama América para pedirme un favor.*

42.2.2 Word order in relative clauses

Verb-Subject order is also strongly preferred in relative clauses to keep the verb close to the relative pronoun and to avoid leaving the verb at the end of the sentence. Spanish dislikes sentences

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* and not ?*ese/ése es el perro que mi amigo de Kansas City compró.* This rule also applies to subordinate clauses introduced by such words as *donde*, *como* and *cuando*. Examples (subordinate clause in bold):

*Estas acciones han rendido más **que las que compró tu madre***	These shares have yielded more than the ones your mother bought
*el carnaval de invierno **que organiza el Departamento de Turismo***	the Winter Carnival that the Department of Tourism is organizing
*la enorme fuerza **que cobraba la derecha*** (JA, Mex.)	the enormous strength the political Right was acquiring
*Un noble y heroico pasado en **el que muy pocos españoles habían sido franquistas** y en **el que habían sido resistentes o disidentes antifranquistas muchos** que no habían movido un dedo contra el franquismo* (JC, Sp. SV order in first relative clause, VS order in second)	A noble and heroic past in which very few Spaniards had been Franco supporters and in which many who had never lifted a finger against Franco had been in the anti-Franco resistance or been dissidents
*Ya verás **cuando regrese tu padre**, él sabrá meterte en cintura con unos buenos cintarazos* (EM, Mex., dialogue)	You'll soon see when your father gets back. He'll know how to make you behave with a few good thwacks with his belt
*Pasamos tan rápido **como nos lo permiten los lomos de burro*** (CP, Arg. *Un lomo de burro* or 'donkey's back' is called *un badén* in Spain)	We drove through as fast as the speed humps let us

42.2.3 Word order when both 42.2.1 and 42.2.2 apply

When the rules outlined in the two preceding sections are applied, the word order may be very different from English: *paga el invitado que más cerveza bebe*, literally 'pays the guest who most beer drinks', i.e. 'the guest who drinks most beer pays' (but *. . . que bebe más cerveza* is equally acceptable). Further examples:

Así dice la carta que nos envió tu padre	That's what the letter your father sent says
Son innumerables las dificultades que plantea la lucha contra el terrorismo (*La Vanguardia*, Sp.)	The difficulties posed by the struggle against terrorism are innumerable
Gana el jugador que pierda primero todas sus cartas (*La Jornada*, Mex.)	The first player to lose all her/his cards wins

42.3 Word order in questions (direct and indirect) and in exclamations

42.3.1 Word order after question words

Verb-Subject order is used after question words, e.g.:

¿cómo? how?	*¿cuánto*? how much/many?	*¿qué?* what?/which? (see note 1)
¿cuál (*de*)*?* which (of)?	*¿dónde?* where?	*¿a quién?* whom?
¿cuándo? when?	*¿por/para qué?* why?	

Examples (verb and its subject in bold):

*¿Cómo **va una** a estar esperando y delgada?* (AM, Mex., dialogue)	How's one going to be expecting a baby and be thin?
*¿Qué tal **va tu nuevo trabajo**?*	How's your new job going?
*¿Con quién **se casó Marco**?*	Who(m) did Marco marry?
*¿Sabes en dónde **estudió tu novio**?*	Do you know where your boyfriend studied?
*No recuerdo cómo **iba vestida su mujer*** (JC, Sp., dialogue)	I don't remember how his wife was dressed
*Se pudo ver cuánta razón **tenía Cosío Villegas** casi 40 años antes* (JA, Mex.)	One could see how right Cosío Villegas had been nearly forty years earlier

This also applies to exclamations:

*¡Cómo **se parece Chelo** a su madre!*	Doesn't Chelo look like her mother!
*¡Cuánta carne **come tu hermano!***	What a lot of meat your brother eats!
*¡Qué inútil **es este teclado!***	This keyboard is really useless!
*Qué bonito **estuvo eso**, me sonó como a canción ranchera* (ES, Mex., dialogue. *canto ranchero* = a type of traditional Mexican song)	That was so pretty, it sounded like *canción ranchera* to me

(1) See 42.3.4 for regional exceptions to the above rule.

(2) English tends to put verbs at the end of indirect questions, as in this sentence from a BBC documentary: 'I don't know what the answer to the question "is there life on Mars?" **is**'. This must be reordered in Spanish: *no sé **cuál es** la respuesta a la pregunta ¿hay vida en Marte?* Spanish does not usually allow verbs to be left at the end of a clause or sentence far from their subjects or objects.

42.3.2 Word order in questions containing subjects and direct objects

(**a**) When the object is shorter than the subject, Verb-Object-Subject order is common but not always obligatory (direct objects in bold type):

Short direct objects

*¿Dónde compra **fruta** el dueño de la tienda de enfrente?*	Where does the owner of the shop/store opposite buy fruit?
*¿A quién ha escrito **la carta** tu amigo Federico?*	Who(m) did your friend Federico write the letter to?

(**b**) When the direct object is longer than the subject, Verb-Subject-Object order is preferred.

Long direct objects

*¿Dónde compran los adolescentes **las drogas vendidas por los narcotraficantes**?*	Where do (the) teenagers buy the drugs sold by the dealers?
*¿Cuándo va a incluir su revista **programas y artículos dedicados a ordenadores tales como los ya citados**?* (Lat. Am. *la computadora* or *el computador* for *el ordenador*)	When is your magazine going to include program(me)s and articles devoted to computers like the ones mentioned above?

(**c**) When subject and object are of equal length, either order may be used.

Subjects and objects of equal length	
*¿Cuándo piensan hacer**lo** ustedes?/ ¿Cuándo piensan ustedes hacer**lo**?*	When are you thinking of doing it?
*¿Dónde compra **pan** mamá? /¿Dónde compra mamá **pan**?*	Where does Mother buy bread?

(1) A noun phrase introduced by *¿qué?* meaning 'which?', or by *¿cuál de?* 'which?' always appears before the verb: *¿qué programas han gustado más al público?* 'which programmes did the public like most?', *¿qué frutas ha comprado Marta*? 'what fruits did Marta buy?', *¿cuál de los móviles tiene más autonomía?* 'which of the mobile phones/cell phones has the longest battery life?'

(2) A similar rule affects *cuánto/a* when it refers to the subject of the verb: the order Subject-Verb-Object is used (direct objects in bold): *¿cuántos hombres venderían **su alma** al diablo por estar con ella en ese cuarto?* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'how many men would sell their souls to the Devil to be in that room with her?' Compare this sentence where *cuánto* is the direct object or refers to the object of the verb: *¿**cuánto** pagó tu primo por la moto?* 'how much did your cousin pay for the motorbike?', *me pregunté **cuánto tiempo** llevarían aquellos dos viéndose así*, (JM, Sp., dialogue) 'I wondered how long these two must have been meeting like that'.

(3) When an indirect object is also involved, keep the subject and the direct object close to the verb: *¿ha devuelto Alfredo **los libros** a la biblioteca*? 'has Alfredo returned the books to the library?' (direct object in bold, indirect object underlined).

42.3.3 Word order in questions that do not contain a question word

When no question word is included in a question Verb-Subject order is also usual: *¿sabe Carlos la verdad?* 'does Carlos know the truth?', *¿ha llegado el paquete?* 'has the parcel arrived?', *¿se habrá apagado la caldera?* 'has the boiler gone out?'. But Subject-Verb order can be used, in which case, question (i.e. rising) intonation is the only thing in speech that shows that a question is intended, and in writing the upside-down question mark warns the reader that a question is coming:

¿Julia viene esta noche? (usually *¿viene Julia esta noche?*)	Is Julia coming tonight?
¿Tú también notaste lo bonito que se ríe? (AM, Mex., dialogue; Sp. *lo bonita que es su risa*)	Did you also notice how prettily she laughs?
¿El XIII [decimotercer] Congreso va a ser el de la desaparición de su partido?	Is the 13th Congress going to be the one at which your party disappears?
¿Usted no sabe dónde está? (ES, Mex., dialogue)	'You don't know where he is, do you?'

42.3.4 Unusual SV word order after question words in parts of Latin America

The Spanish of Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and occasionally of Venezuela and Colombia – but not of Mexico – is unusual in retaining Subject-Verb order after question words (subject in bold): *¿cómo **usted** conoció que Tony tenía negocio de narcotráfico?* (*Vde*C, standard Spanish *cómo se enteró **usted** de que . . .*) 'how did you find out that Tony had a drug-dealing business?', *¿en qué fecha **usted** ingresó en la Corporación CIMEX?* (ibid., standard Spanish *ingresó **usted***) 'on what date did you join the CIMEX Corporation?', *¿qué **tú** crees del acto de hoy en el Teatro Oriente?* (LO, Cu., dialogue, standard *¿qué piensas tú del acto?*) 'what do you think of the event today at the Oriente Theatre?'

42.4 Inversion in dialogue identifiers

Verb-Subject order is required in writing in dialogue identifiers of the sort 'Mary said', 'John replied' when they follow the words quoted:

—*Tengo razón* —*dijo el presidente*	'I'm right,' the President said
—*Te invito a cenar hoy o a comer mañana* —*dijo él como si ordenara*—. *A comer mañana* —*contestó ella* (AM, Mex., dialogue)	'I'm inviting you to supper today or lunch tomorrow,' he said, as though giving. an order. 'Lunch tomorrow,' she replied
—*No te hace gracia, ¿verdad?* —*le preguntó aquella noche Anita* (AG, Sp., dialogue)	'You don't find it amusing, do you?' Anita asked him that night

(1) In this respect Spanish is more conservative than English: ' "I'm right,'" said the President' for 'the President said' sounds old-fashioned nowadays.

42.5 Verb-Subject order is common after many adverbs and adverbial phrases

Verb-Subject order is common when an adverbial (an adverb or adverbial phrase) appears at the head of a phrase or clause, particularly when the verb following the adverbial is **intransitive**. This occurs in English as well, as the following examples show, where speakers of both languages would probably prefer sentences (**a**) to (**b**) (subjects in bold throughout this section):

(**a**) *Delante de mí se levantaba* ***un enorme edificio***	Before me stood/rose an enormous building
Delante de ella aparecieron ***dos hombres chillando y gesticulando***	Before her there appeared two men screaming and gesticulating
(**b**) ?*Delante de mí* ***un enorme edificio*** *se levantaba*	?Before me an enormous building rose
?*Delante de ella* ***dos hombres chillando y gesticulando*** *aparecieron*	?Before her two men screaming and gesticulating appeared

Inversion of the usual order after certain adverbials also occurs in literary English: 'never **had I** seen so much gold' for 'I had never seen so much gold', 'hardly **had Robert** arrived home when the storm broke'. This construction is more common in Spanish. In the following cases, inversion is overwhelmingly the norm:

Siempre me dijeron ***las brujas y echadoras de cartas*** *que mi número mágico era el tres* (CRG, Sp.)	Witches and card-readers always told me that my magic number was three
Siempre fue altanera ***la Sofía*** (AM, Mex., dialogue. See 3.2.21 for the *la*)	Sofia was always haughty/arrogant
Nunca me hablaban ***los vecinos***	The neighbours never spoke to me
Apenas salían ***sus padres****, ponía música rock*	(S)he used to put on rock music as soon as his/her parents went out
Así era ***este monstruo*** *que sin pestañear podía mandar a la muerte a cientos de miles de sus propios soldados* (RM, Sp.)	Such was this monster [Hitler] who could send hundreds of thousands of his soldiers to their deaths without blinking

*Bien saben **las autoridades** que . . .*	The authorities know very well that . . .
*Todavía humeaban **algunos incendios***	Some fires were still smoking
*Para tales personas existen **las cárceles***	Prisons exist for such people
*Ahí vivo **yo***	That's where I live
*Junto a la puerta colgaba **una deshilachada toalla*** (LS, Ch.)	Next to the door hung a frayed towel
*A esta computadora llegan **una serie de datos*** (MC, Mex., dialogue. Sp. *a este ordenador*)	A stream of data comes to this computer

But inversion is not always obligatory, as these sentences show:

*Así **Lorenzo** aprendió a jugar billar* (EP, Mex., or *así aprendió Lorenzo . . .*)	in this way Lorenzo learned to play snooker/pool
*Siempre **alguien** le leía en voz alta lo que publicaban sus periódicos* (JA, Mex.), (or *siempre le leía alguien*)	Someone always read to him out loud what his newspapers were publishing
*Quizá **Daniel** le sacara dos o tres años* (RM, Sp.)	Maybe Daniel was two or three years older than her

It is difficult to formulate rules about this kind of inversion. Stylistic factors and sentence rhythm and balance often determine the choice of word order.

(1) If the adverbial is not placed at the head of the sentence or phrase, Subject-Verb order is restored:

***Las brujas y echadoras de cartas** siempre me dijeron que*	Witches and card-readers always told me that . . .
***Algunos incendios** humeaban todavía*	Some fires were still smoking
***Las cárceles** existen para tales personas*	Prisons exist for such people

(2) When the verb is **transitive**, various word orders are possible in Spanish (subject in bold): *delante de ella **dos mujeres** voceaban sus mercancías* 'before her two women were calling out their wares', or *delante de ella voceaban sus mercancías **dos mujeres***.

42.6 Word order in imperatives

See 21.4 for discussion of this topic. Verb-subject order is especially common in third-person imperative sentences introduced by *que* (see 21.6): *que **venga tu hermana** en seguida* 'get your sister to come right now', *que no **vuelva Lucía** a comprar ese queso horrible* 'don't let Lucía buy that horrible cheese again'.

42.7 Miscellaneous word order rules

This section includes a number of miscellaneous but important rules that explain various features of Spanish word order.

42.7.1 Prepositions stay with the word they modify

Important: Spanish does not separate prepositions from the word or phrase that they modify. An 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' (for more on this point, see 38.1.1):

*Su nombramiento se demoró **por estar** siempre la vacante ocupada* (not **por la vacante estar siempre ocupada*)	His nomination (to the post) was delayed because the vacant position was always occupied
*Tú eras la persona **en la que** estaba pensando* (never ***la persona que estaba pensando en*)	You were the person I was thinking about

(1) In general only a few words like *no*, *siempre*, *nunca* can separate a preposition from its infinitive: *se había echado a llorar frente al micrófono por no poder hilvanar tres frases* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'she started crying in front of the microphone because she wasn't capable of putting three sentences together', *por llegar siempre tarde/por siempre llegar tarde* 'because of always being late'.

42.7.2 Set phrases are not broken up

Set phrases, particularly set verbal phrases like *tener que* 'to have to', *llevar a cabo* 'carry out', *hacer público* 'make public', *surtir efecto* 'produce an effect', *tener lugar* 'take place', *darse cuenta de que* 'realize', should not be broken up by the insertion of other words:

No se cansaba de sugerir que llevaría a cabo las rectificaciones que se exigían (JA, Mex., not **que llevaría las rectificaciones que se exigían a cabo*)	He never tired of suggesting that he would make the amendments that were required
Hacemos pública esta información (and not the typical English word order . . . *hacemos esta información pública*)	We are making this information public
Justo lo último que un investigador juicioso desea hacer, hasta que no tiene atados todos los cabos (LS, Sp. Not . . . *hasta que no tiene todos los cabos atados*)	Exactly the last thing a smart investigator wants to do until/before he's got all the loose ends tied up

42.7.3 No insertion of words between *haber* and participles

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 toujours pensé que . . .* is *siempre he pensado que . . .* or *he pensado siempre que . . .*). This rule is occasionally broken: see 18.1.1.

42.7.4 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', *solo/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 or gerund: *no debí decírtelo* or *no te lo debí decir*, *estoy haciéndolo* or *lo estoy haciendo* 'I'm doing it'. This is discussed at 14.3.

(1) Important: no words, and especially not *y* or *o*, can come between these unstressed pronouns: 'I saw him *and* her' is (*los*) *vi a él y a ella*, never ***lo y la vi* or ***le y la vi*. See 14.2.4. note 4.

42.7.5 Adjectival phrases are kept close to the noun they modify

Spanish does not like to separate adjectival phrases (in bold) 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* (CF, Mex.)	He returned around 6.30 with a crumpled and egg-stained copy of the midday *Últimas Noticias*

This sentence would sound awkward, at least in careful styles, if the adjectival phrase were put at the end: ? . . . *con un ejemplar de las Últimas Noticias del mediodía arrugado y manchado de huevo* (but more acceptable if a comma is inserted after *mediodía*).

Compound nouns formed with *de* are not broken up. One says *un lápiz de memoria barato* 'a cheap memory-stick/flash drive' not **un lápiz barato de memoria*. See 5.10.5.

42.7.6 Numerals may be avoided in careful styles at the beginning of sentences

See 11.16 note 1 for discussion.

42.7.7 Word order in apposition

When two nouns are in apposition (see Glossary), nothing should separate them: one says ***había muerto*** *J.M., leyenda de la música rock de los años sesenta* 'J. M., legend of sixties rock music, had died', in order to keep *J. M.* and *leyenda* together, not ?*J.M. había muerto, leyenda de la música rock . . . .* Another example: *le abrió el portero, un indio viejo con cara de sonámbulo* (CF, Mex.) 'the doorman, an old Indian with a face like a sleepwalker's, opened the door for him', rather than *el portero le abrió, un indio viejo . . .*

42.8 Position of adverbs and adverbial phrases

42.8.1 Adverbs and adverb phrases are kept close to the words they modify

To repeat what has been implicit so far in this chapter, adverbials (i.e. adverbs, adverbial phrases and adverbial clauses) are usually placed either immediately before or immediately after the word(s) that they modify. In this respect the *Libro de estilo* of *El País*, 2014, 13.1, 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* (*Libro de estilo*, ibid.). This is the usual English order and, despite *El País*, common in Spanish.

42.8.2 Adverbials are not left at the end of sentences

Important: it follows from the preceding section that English differs from Spanish by constantly putting adverbs and adverb phrases at the end of sentences: 'I saw that lady who won the lottery **yesterday**' is a typically irritating English sentence which does not make clear whether you saw her yesterday or she won the lottery yesterday. For the reason given at 42.8.1, Spanish puts 'yesterday' close to the verb it refers to: *vi ayer/ayer vi a esa señora que ganó la lotería* means you saw her yesterday. *Vi a esa señora que ganó ayer la lotería* means that she won the lottery yesterday.

This preference for keeping adverbs close to their verb therefore produces the un-English order Verb-Adverbial-Object (adverbials in bold):

*Besó **fervorosamente** la mano de su anfitriona*	(S)he kissed his/her 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* (AM, Mex., dialogue; in Spain *las chanclas* are 'flip-flops' and slippers are *las zapatillas*)	She was nearly always still in her slippers and dressing-gown/US bathrobe at one o'clock

Note particularly the position of the adverbials 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*	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
*Me di cuenta de que había estado **antes** en aquel sitio*	I realized I'd been in that place before
*¿Sabes que el presidente Romeo Lucas sufrió **ayer** un atentado? Estaba en su coche parado en un semáforo cuando **desde una bicicleta** le arrojaron un diccionario* (joke about an illiterate Guatemalan dictator)	Do you know someone made an attempt on President Romeo Lucas's life yesterday? He was waiting in his car at some traffic lights when they threw a dictionary at him from a bicycle

(1) Important: adverbs of time are very often put before adverbials of place: 'we went to grandma's house yesterday' = *ayer fuimos/fuimos ayer a casa de la abuela*.

For further remarks about the position of adverbials see 42.5 and 35.3.8.

42.9 Word order not explainable by sentence structure

Even when all the preceding more or less codifiable rules are taken into account, there are many cases in which Spanish word order differs from that of English due to factors that reflect the information content of the sentence. It is not easy to explain these factors in grammar books which necessarily quote fragments of language out of context.

One example of this is the contrast between *ha llegado el cartero* and *el cartero ha llegado* 'the postman's arrived' (see 42.9.2). Another example is *y no crea que a mi niño le voy a contar la historia* (ES, Mex., dialogue), 'and don't think that I'm going to tell the story to my child', which could have been equally well expressed *y no crea que le voy a contar la historia a mi niño.* Likewise, *es un poco lento, pero tonto no es* 'he's a bit slow, but he's no fool' is the same – with a difference of emphasis– as *es un poco lento pero no es tonto*.

As was stated at 42.1.2, English constantly uses stress and intonation to make clear these differences whereas Spanish prefers to use variations of word order.

42.9.1 The topic of a sentence tends to come first

Utterances naturally consist of a 'topic' or 'theme' – something we want to say something about – and a 'comment' – what we say *about* the topic. In simple declarative sentences, i.e. ones which are neither questions nor orders, the subject of the main verb is usually also the topic of the sentence: '**Marta** loves strawberry yoghurt' is about Marta, '**polar bears** have amazingly thick fur' is about polar bears, and the normal order in such sentences in both English in Spanish is topic – comment: ***Marta*** *adora el yogur de fresa*, ***los osos polares*** *tienen un pelaje extraordinariamente espeso*.

But the topic need not necessarily be the subject of the verb. It may be some adverbial phrase, as in ***los viernes*** *suelo jugar al bridge* '**on Fridays** I usually play bridge'; or it may be the direct object of a transitive verb or the predicate of a verb like 'to be', as in the emotional assertions ***caracoles*** *no como* 's**nails** I'm not eating!', ***muy seguro*** *estás tú de ti mismo* 'you're very sure of yourself!'

As the *NGLE* 40.2k says, topics rarely come at the end of a sentence in Spanish. This makes sentences like ? *sabe mucho de informática y contabilidad Pilar* '(as for) Pilar, she knows a lot about computing and accounting' infrequent in Spanish: (*en cuanto a*) *Pilar sabe mucho de informática y contabilidad*.

Another feature not found in Spanish is the topicalization of subject pronouns of verbs by repeating them. This occurs in English and is common in French: 'me, I hate mustard', *moi, je déteste la moutarde*, simply *yo odio la mostaza*, or *yo la mostaza la odio*, or *en cuanto a mí, odio la mostaza*. As explained at 12.2.1, subject pronouns like *yo*, *tú*, *él* are themselves already stressed so they usually do not need further emphasis: *conduzco* means 'I drive', *yo conduzco* means '*I* drive'.

In the following sentences, the topic has been focused by shifting it to the head of the sentence or clause in a way often unfamiliar to English speakers (topics in bold):

*¡**De dinero** no quiero volver a oír ni una palabra!*	About *money* I don't want to hear another word!
***Lo de la bomba** no me lo trago* (MVLl, Pe., dialogue)	I don't swallow (i.e. 'believe') that business about the bomb
***Millonaria** no soy, tendré que hacer sacrificios para costearle sus estudios* (ES, Mex., dialogue)	I'm not a millionaire, I'll have to make sacrifices to pay for his studies
***Americano** vino uno solamente* (Cuban TV interview)	As for Americans, only one came
***Como en la foto de la boda** no creo que yo vuelva a estar*	I don't think I'll be like I was in the wedding photo again
***El capitalismo** lo está salvando la clase obrera* (MVM, Sp., dialogue)	As for capitalism, the working class is saving it
***Sombrero** no creo que lleve*	As for a hat, I don't think (s)he's wearing one
*Yo recuerdo que, **como maestra**, reclamaba la más absoluta entrega*	I recall that, as a teacher, she demanded the most absolute commitment
*Ya te digo, **Alberto**, **de eso**, no sabe nada*	I tell you Alberto knows nothing about *that*
*¿Y **tú** para qué quieres un consejero?* (AM, Mex., dialogue)	And what do *you* want a counsellor for?
*Creo que **algo** había escuchado* (MC, Mex. dialogue)	I think I had heard *something*
***Eso** sí que no lo pude soportar* (ES, Mex. dialogue)	I really couldn't put up with *that*!

(1) When a direct or indirect object is placed before the verb, it is almost always resumed or echoed by a 'redundant' pronoun: *al verano inglés debían llamar**lo** estación de las lluvias* 'the English summer ought to be called the rainy season', *a José no **le** dije nada* 'I didn't say anything to José'. See 14.10 for details and exceptions. Direct objects that are not defined by an article or some other word are not echoed: *dinero no tengo* 'I've no money', *risa me das tú* '*you* make me laugh'.

(2) One of the functions of the passive with *ser* is to make the direct object of the equivalent active sentence into a topic by putting it at the head of the utterance: *Miguel fue atropellado por el coche* 'Miguel was run over by the car' is more likely than ?*el coche atropelló a Miguel* ?'the car ran over Miguel' which answers the question 'what did the car do?', which is obviously less important than what happened to Miguel.

Since informal Spanish generally avoids the passive with *ser*, 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 el coche*.

(3) Latin-American headline writers often exploit the fact that the topic of an utterance can be dramatically focused by putting it first: *a tres coches quemaron* (Colombian headline) 'three cars burnt', *ingeniero buscamos* (advert., Ven.) 'engineer sought', *signada por muchos altibajos estuvo la actividad bursátil* (headline in *La Nación*, Arg., *signada = caracterizada* in Spain) 'Stock Exchange activity marked by many rises and falls', *gigantesco tiburón de una especie desconocida capturó un pesquero frente a las costas del Chuy* (*El País*, Ur.) 'giant shark of unknown species caught by fishing boat off Chuy coast', *aumentan fenómenos extremos ante cambio climático* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'extreme [weather] phenomena increase as a result of climate change'. This word order often sounds strange to Spaniards.

(4) The topic may be identified by some phrase like *en cuanto a* 'as for', *con respecto a* 'with regard to', *en/por lo que se refiere a . . .* 'with reference to', 'as far as . . . is concerned', e.g. *por lo que se refiere a Pedro, no lo/le he visto* 'as far as Pedro's concerned, I haven't seen him'. Use of such phrases is more common in written language: informally one might say *a Pedro no lo/le he visto.*

42.9.2 *El profesor viene* or *Viene el profesor*?

This section deals with sentences that do not have a direct object.

Context is all-important in the following discussion. In this example, we are watching two persons, Martín and Julia, and one of them has said something. Consider the following three possible questions:

(**a**) 'Who spoke?' *¿Quién ha hablado?* (assuming we don't know who spoke)
(**b**) 'What did Martín do?' *¿Qué ha hecho Martín?* (assuming we know Martín did something)
(**c**) 'What happened?' *¿Qué ha pasado?* (assuming we simply know something happened but have no idea what)

(a) asks for information about the subject of the verb. **(b)** asks for information about what Martín did. Question **(c)** simply asks what happened.

In **(a)** the new information in the answer is Martín, and it is likely to come after the verb in Spanish, although we are more likely to drop the old information altogether: (*ha hablado*) *Martín.* The answer ?*Martín ha hablado* sounds quite wrong unless we heavily stress *Martín*, just as stressing 'spoke' would sound wrong in English.

In **(b)** 'spoke' is the new information in the answer, so it tends to come last and, again, we are likely to drop the old information: (*Martín*) *ha hablado*; ?*ha hablado Martín* sounds wrong, just as stressing Martín would sound wrong in English.

In **(c)** all the information is new – assuming we heard an unidentified noise and don't know who made it – so the subject is likely to come first and none of the information is dropped: *Martín ha hablado*, although we could emphasize Martín – *ha hablado Martín.* Alternatively we might say *alguien ha hablado* 'someone spoke'.

This principle explains the word order of the following sentences in which the words in bold are 'new' information which the speaker wants to emphasize:

*Viene **la democracia y la justicia** para el pueblo de Honduras* (*La Prensa*, Hon.)	Democracy and justice are coming for the people of Honduras
*—¿Por qué estáis tan contentos? —Ha vuelto a casa **el perro***	'Why are you so pleased?' 'The dog's come back home'
*¡Ojo! Viene **la policía***	Watch out! The police are coming!
*Pasó la **mañana de trabajo**; pasó **la hora de un almuerzo demasiado largo*** (CF, Mexico)	The morning of work ended; the excessively long lunch hour ended

However, as we have seen, this word order can often be over-ridden by stress and intonation, so ***el perro** ha vuelto a casa*, ***la policía** viene ahora* in which the bold words are emphasized, sound normal. As a result, word order in many cases seems fairly arbitrary, for example in these sentences, where the subjects in bold could have come before or after the verb with little detectable stylistic effect: *. . . la primera vez que **eso** ocurrió en un gobierno estatal en décadas* (JV, Mex.) 'the first time that had happened in a state government in decades', *brillaban **algunas estrellas** en el cielo azul añil* (MVLl, Pe.) 'a few stars were shining in the indigo blue sky', *acababa de entrar **el verano** y hacía mucho calor* (ES, Mex., dialogue) 'Summer had just begun and it was very hot', *si un día se diese la noticia de que **Enric Marco** ha muerto, la plaza de Cataluña se quedaría pequeña para acoger a la gente que iría a llorarlo* (JC, Sp., dialogue) 'if the news broke one day that Enric Marco had died, the Plaza de Cataluña wouldn't be room enough for the people who'd come to mourn (lit. 'weep for') him'.

Verb-Subject word order in this type of sentence was more common in the past than now. Beginning a paragraph with *volvió Jacinta al comedor, y el último cuento que trajo fue este . . .* (Galdós, Sp., late nineteenth century) 'Jacinta returned to the dining room, and the latest story that she brought with her was this . . .' sounds quite literary and would now almost certainly be written *Jacinta volvió al comedor, y . . .*

(1) Nouns preceded by an indefinite article or by no article at all are likely to constitute new information: *ha ocurrido **un error*** 'an error has occurred', *ha llamado **un amigo de Raúl*** 'a friend of Raúl's has called', *caía **mucha nieve*** 'a lot of snow was falling'. That *un error*, *un amigo* de *Raúl* and *nieve* are new information is demonstrated by the bizarre effect of stressing 'occurred', 'has called' or 'was falling' in the English translations'.

42.9.3 Word order in sentences other than questions that include direct objects

Bearing in mind the points previously raised in this chapter, a sentence consisting of a subject, verb and direct object can therefore theoretically appear in Spanish in the following forms:

(**a**) *Ana leyó el libro*	Subject-Verb-Direct Object
(**b**) *El libro lo leyó Ana*	Direct Object-(redundant pronoun)-Verb-Subject
(c) *El libro Ana lo leyó*	Direct Object-Subject-(redundant pronoun)-Verb

(d) *Leyó Ana el libro*	Verb-Subject-Direct Object
(e) *Leyó el libro Ana*	Verb-Direct Object-Subject

Of these possibilities, only the first three are at all common in ordinary language. Sentences **(d)** and (**e**) are only found in archaic or flowery literary styles unless they are questions, as in *¿leyó Ana el libro?*, *¿leyó el libro Ana?* 'did Ana read the book?'

(**a**) is a neutral word order corresponding to an English sentence spoken with equal emphasis on 'Ana' and 'book'. Since, in neutral sentences, the subject of the verb tends naturally to be the topic, Subject-Verb-Object order is normal.

(**b**) clearly makes the direct object, the book, into the topic of the sentence, and then adds the comment about what Ana did to it: 'as for the book, Ana read it'. It also may focus Ana: 'Ana (not someone else) read the book'. Another example: *. . . porque todo eso lo supo en el confesionario* (GZ, Mex., dialogue) 'because he learned about *all that* in the confessional', where *todo eso* is the topic. See 14.10.1 for the use of the redundant pronoun here. This order creates the same effect as the passive with *ser*, i.e. *el libro fue leído por Ana*, which is less natural in spoken Spanish.

(**c**) makes Ana into the topic of the sentence and also focuses the direct+ object – the book. It therefore means something like 'as for Ana, she read the book'.

43 Diminutive, augmentative and pejorative suffixes

This chapter discusses:

- Diminutive suffixes like *-ito*, *-illo*, *ín*, etc. (Section 43.2)
- Augmentative suffixes like *-ón*, *-azo*, *-ote*, *-udo* (Section 43.3)
- Pejorative suffixes like *-aco*, *-acho*, *-ajo*, *-uco*, *-ucho*, etc. (Section 43.4)

43.1 General

There are numerous Spanish affective suffixes that alter the emotional tone of a word, e.g. *-ito*, *-illo*, *-ón*, *-ote*, *-azo*, *-aco*, *-ejo*, etc. Their effect is unpredictable. Sometimes they simply create new words without any emotional colouring at all: *ventana* = 'window', *ventanilla* = 'window of a vehicle' among other things; *la caja* = 'box', *el cajón* = 'drawer' (in furniture); *el coche* means 'car' in Spain, but *el cochecito*, as well as being the diminutive of 'car', also means 'baby pram'/'baby carriage'; *el carro* is 'car' in Mexico and other Latin-American countries, but *el carrito* is a supermarket or baggage trolley. These words must be learned separately.

Often these suffixes add an emotional shade to a word or phrase, e.g. affection, contempt, irony, repugnance, and they may sound affected, effeminate, childish or offensive if used wrongly. Learners are therefore advised not to experiment with them, since inexpert use may produce non-words or unexpected effects: *cocinita* is a small *cocina* or kitchen, but **dormitorito* from *dormitorio* 'bedroom' is not Spanish; *figura* = 'figure'/'shape', *figurín* means, among other things, 'fashion magazine'.

In view of this and the fact that the forms and frequency of the suffixes differ widely from place to place – they are used much less in Argentina than in Mexico – and also in some regions seem to be more common in women's speech than men's, the following account is very condensed. Except where indicated, the following remarks apply to educated usage in central Spain, and they should be checked against the speech habits of other regions and of the Latin-American republics.

43.2 Diminutive suffixes

Diminutive suffixes have various uses, described at 43.2.1–6. A few words must be said about their relationship with the adjective *pequeño*. The following remarks apply to spoken rather than to formal written Spanish.

Pequeño means 'small', but it does not usually have the emotional overtones of the English word 'little' or the French *petit*. *Pequeño* is used:

(**a**) to mean 'slight'/'unimportant' with abstract nouns: *un pequeño problema* 'a slight problem' (familiarly also *un problemita/problemilla*), *esas pequeñas complicaciones que mencionamos* 'those slight complications that we mentioned', *España era una pequeña potencia* 'Spain was a small/unimportant power'.

(**b**) To mean 'small' as opposed to 'large' without any warm overtones or implications of 'cute': *un ratón es más pequeño que una rata* 'a mouse is smaller than a rat', *una pequeña cantidad de azufre* 'a small quantity of sulphur', *un niño pequeño* 'a small child', *no podía manejar ni siquiera esa pequeña empresa* (AH, Mex.) 'she wasn't even able to run that small business'.

The English combination of 'little' followed by a noun is, in spoken Spanish, very often expressed by a diminutive. One says *esta casa es pequeña* but, colloquially, *una casita* for a 'little house'; *un perrito* rather than *un pequeño perro* 'a little dog', *un pajarito* rather than *un pequeño pájaro* 'a little bird': *. . . desde la primera vez que la vio leyendo bajo los árboles del parquecito* (GGM, Col.) 'since the first time he had seen her reading under the trees in the little park', *conozco un barecito ahí en la calle del Pez* (JMa, Sp., dialogue). 'I know a little bar nearby in Pez street', *sacó un kleenex de una bolsita de plástico* (MS, Mex.) 'he took a tissue out of a little plastic bag'. In more formal styles one might have said *el pequeño parque*, *un pequeño bar*, *una pequeña bolsa*.

(1) *Chico*, or familiarly *chiquito*, is often used colloquially for *pequeño*, above all in Latin America, but it does not come before nouns: *España era bonita pero chica y en las playas el agua estaba demasiado fría* (ES. Mex., dialogue) 'Spain was pretty but small and the water on the beaches was too cold', *no faltará quien lo entere, en este mundo tan chiquito* (CF, Mex., dialogue. Spain *quien se lo diga* or *quien le informe*) 'there's bound to be someone in this tiny world who'll tell him'.

(2) Sometimes abbreviations are used in familiar speech instead of suffixes, e.g. *cole* from *colegio* 'school', *la tele* from *televisión*, *la peli* for *la película* 'film', etc. In Spain a little child is often affectionately called *el chiquitín*, *el nene*, *el pequeño*, *el pequeñín* or even *el peque*.

43.2.1 Formation of the diminutive

-ito is the most common diminutive suffix throughout the Hispanic world. *-illo* is used especially in southern Spain, while *-ico*, *-iño* and *-ín* have a north-western Spanish flavour. The usual form is shown first, with variant forms in brackets:

-ito (*-cito*, *-ecito*)	*-ico* (*-cico*, *-ecico*)	*-ín*
-ete (*-cete*, *-ecete*)	*-illo* (*-cillo*, *-ecillo*)	*-iño*
		-uelo (*-zuelo*, *-ezuelo*)

All are marked for gender in the usual way: for the feminine a final vowel is replaced by *-a*; *-ín* makes its feminine *-ina*.

(1) In Spain words of more than one syllable ending in *-n* or *-r*, and words ending in *-e* or having the diphthong *-ie* or *-ue* in their first syllable, usually take the form in *-c-*. The following forms were generated spontaneously by informants from Spain, but not all are guaranteed to be in common use:

cajón drawer: *cajoncito*	*nieto* grandson: *nietecito*	*siesta* afternoon nap *siestecita*
cofre case/box: *cofrecito*	*padre* father: *padrecito*	*viejo/vieja* old man/woman
madre mother: *madrecita*	*piedra* stone: *piedrecita*	*viejecito/viejecita*
mayor bigger: *mayorcito*	*puente* bridge: *puentecito*	
mujer woman: *mujercita*	*puerta* door *puertecita*	

But note *un café* 'a coffee' > *un cafecito* or *cafetito* or *cafelito*. Also *el alfiler* > *alfilerito* 'pin', *la mano* > *la manita/la manecita* 'hand' (*la manito*, is not uncommon in Latin America).

In Latin America words containing *ie* or *ue* tend to make their diminutive regularly, i.e. *viejito/viejita*, *siesta/siestita*, *puerta/puertita*, *después de un sueñito de 50 o de 100 años* (*La Jornada*, Mex.) 'after a sleep lasting 50 or 100 years', *como una piedrita en el zapato* (*La Nación*, Arg.) 'like a stone

in one's shoe', *donde había nacido su otro nietito* (*El Comercio*, Pe.) 'where his other grandson had been born'.

(2) Words of one syllable commonly take forms in *-ec-*, at least in Spain:

flor flower *florecita*	*rey* king *reyecito*	*tos* cough *tosecilla/tosecita*
pan bread *panecillo* bread roll	*sol* sun *solecillo/solecito*	*voz* voice *vocecita/vocecilla*
pez fish *pececito/pececillo*		

But note the following Latin-American forms: *tiene el vestido a florcitas verdes* (MP, Arg., dialogue; Spain *florecitas*) 'she's got the dress with green flowers', *y el solcito está lindo* (MB, Ur., dialogue) 'and the sun's lovely', *piecillo/piecito* from *el pie* 'foot', usually *piececillo/piececito* in Spain.

(3) 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*:

armario wardrobe *armarito*	*papá* daddy *papaíto* or *papito*
estatua statue *estatuilla*	*silla* chair *sillita*
mamá mummy *mamaíta* or *mamita*	*tío/tía* uncle/aunt *tiíto/tiíta*

(4) Diminutive suffixes are not added – at least in Spain and in most of Latin America – to nouns of more than one syllable ending in *-d* like *la ciudad* 'city', *el césped* 'lawn'.

(5) Note that diphthongs in a word are not modified when these suffixes are added: *vuelta* > *vueltecita* 'a walk' > 'a short walk', not **voltecita*. However, *calentito*, from *caliente*, is used in Spain for 'nice and hot', Lat. Am. *calientito*.

43.2.2 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 (and not only the suffix *-ito*) may simply give a warm tone to a remark. In a bakery, one might say *deme una barrita de pan* 'give me a loaf of bread', which is merely a friendly equivalent of *deme una barra de pan*. This use of the diminutive does not imply smallness but merely signals the speaker's attitude to the hearer:

Dame un paquetito por ahora	Give me just one packet for now
Tómate un cafelito (J. Ma, Sp., dialogue)	Have/Get a coffee
Me vas a tirar el vaso con el codo. A ver si tenemos más cuidadito . . .	You're going to knock my glass over with your elbow. Let's see if we can have a bit more care . . .
Si quería comprarme ropa o alguna cosita para mi hermana le pedía dinero (ES, Mex., dialogue)	If I wanted to buy clothes or a little something for my sister I asked him for money
Un momentito, por favor	Just a moment, please
¿Alguna cosita más? (often used in shops/stores) (cf. *¿Alguna cosa más?*)	Would you like anything else? Anything else?)
¿Te puedo coger una almendrita?	Can I have just one of your almonds?

(**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', *todo* /*todito* 'all'/'absolutely all':

cerquita de la catedral	just by the cathedral
Ahora mismito se lo sirvo	I'll serve you in just a second
Espéreme tantito, ahorita le seguimos, (ES, Mex., dialogue. Sp. *Espéreme un momentito, ahora mismo le seguimos*)	Wait for me for a second, we'll follow you right away
Ya eres mayorcito	You're a big boy now
Está gordito/Está gordo	He's put on a bit of weight/He's fat
¡tontito!/¡tonto!	silly!/fool!
Es igualito	It's exactly the same

'Nice' or 'lovely' can be the English equivalent of some adjectival and adverbial diminutives in *-ito*:*¿un café calentito?* 'a nice cup of hot coffee?', *despacito* 'nice and slow'/'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 merely an affectionate form for *abuela* 'grandmother':

Vamos, m'hijito (Lat.-Am., Sp. *vamos, hijo mío*)	Come on son
Se ha hecho daño en la patita	It's hurt its paw
¡Pobrecito! ¿Te has caído?	Poor little thing! Did you fall down?
Mi abuelo está muy mal, pobrecito	My grandfather is really sick, poor thing

(**d**) To denote smallness:

el perro/el perrito dog/little dog	*el sillón/el silloncito* armchair/little armchair
la puerta/la puertecita door/little door	*la botella/la botellita* bottle/little bottle

Sometimes the diminutive is reinforced, as in *¿tienes un sobrecito pequeño?* 'Have you got a little envelope?' or *—¿quieres un poco? —Solo/Sólo un poquito. No tanto, un poquitín* '"Do you want a bit?" "Just a little bit. Not so much, just a tiny little bit"'.

(**e**) Occasionally in an ironic way to stress a quality: *¡menuda casita!* 'some house' (looking at a vast mansion), *¡mira el cochecito ese!* 'nice little car!'(pointing at a gold-plated Rolls Royce), *la cerebrito de tu hermana* (from *GDLE* 8.4) 'that genius of a sister of yours' (*el cerebro* = 'brain'), *¡vaya semanita!* 'what a week!'

43.2.3 Diminutive suffix *-illo*

The suffix *-illo* is used:

(**a**) as a diminutive:

pan/panecillo	bread/bread roll
flor/florecilla	flower/little flower

(**b**) To downgrade the importance of something:

Tengo unas cosillas que hacer	I've got a few little things to do
Ahora solo/sólo queda el jaleíllo de las entradas (*jaleo* = row, fuss)	All that's left is the business of the entrance tickets

Hacía un airecillo agradable	There was a pleasant breeze
Fuimos a tomar unas cervecitas	We went and had a couple of beers
el truco/el truquillo	trick/'knack'

(**c**) To soften a word that otherwise might sound too offensive:

mentiroso/mentirosillo	liar/'fibber'
Es un poquillo dejada (less often *es dejadilla*. *Dejado* = 'careless'/ 'sloppy')	She's a bit careless/She doesn't take a lot of care
Tú eres un poquillo comilón (less often *eres comiloncillo*)	You eat quite a lot/You sure like your food
Es un buen restaurante pero algo carillo	It's a good restaurant but a bit pricey
graciosillo	funny/'funny guy' (sarcastic tone)

(**d**) To give an affectionate tone:

Pero ¿qué haces, chiquilla?	But what **are** you doing, honey/darling?
He comprado un cachorrillo/cachorrito	I bought a little puppy

(**e**) 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 bolso/el bolsillo handbag/pocket	*la manzana/la manzanilla* apple/camomile (also a type of dry sherry)
el palo/el palillo stick/toothpick	*la masa/la masilla* dough/putty
la bomba/la bombilla bomb/light bulb	*la parra/la parrilla* vine/*a la parrilla* grilled/US broiled
la caja/la cajetilla box/pack for cigarettes, etc.	*la vara/la varilla* rod/thin stick, spoke (but *la varita mágica* 'magic wand')
la cama/la camilla bed/stretcher	
la guerra/la guerrilla war/guerrilla warfare	

(**f**) To denote a combination of diminutive and pejorative:

la cultura/la culturilla culture/smattering of culture	*listo/listillo* clever/'know-all'
la mujer/la mujercilla woman/unimportant woman	

(1) Diminutives in *-illo* are typical of Andalusia but they are also often used elsewhere.

43.2.4 Diminutive suffix *-ín*

-ín is typical of Asturias, but it is used to express affection in many contexts in the rest of Spain:

¿Dónde está el chiquitín?	Where's baby?/the little one?
¡chiquirriquitín!	my tiny little thing!
¡mi (*niña*) *chiquitina!* (not **¡mi pequeña niña*!)	my little girl!

and also to form new words (note how it may change the gender of the noun to masculine):

el cerebro/el cerebrín brain/brainy person	*la maleta/el maletín* suitcase/briefcase
la espada/el espadín sword/dress sword	*la silla/el sillín* chair/saddle
	la tesis/la tesina thesis/dissertation

43.2.5 Diminutive suffixes *-uelo, -eto, -ete*

(**a**) *-uelo* can denote a combination of diminutive and pejorative:

el arroyo/el arroyuelo stream-trickle/rivulet
el rey/el reyezuelo king/petty king/princeling
la calleja/callejuela alley/narrow little alley
tonto/tontuelo stupid/dumbo(affectionate)

It may also be used to form new words: *el paño/el pañuelo* 'cloth'/'handkerchief'.

(**b**) *-eto/eta, -ete/eta* may add a specialized meaning:

el avión/la avioneta aircraft/light aircraft
el camión/la camioneta truck/van or light truck. Often 'bus' in Mexico
el caballo/el caballete horse/easel
la cultura/la cultureta culture/pseudo-culture; *cultureta* also = a person who fancies him/herself as 'cultured'

(**c**) *-ete* may add a humorous tone:

amigo/amiguete friend/ 'pal', 'crony'
gordo/regordete fat/chubby

43.2.6 Diminutive forms in Latin America

In many areas of Latin America, especially Central America and Mexico, diminutive forms pervade everyday speech:

Viene ya merito (Mex., i.e. *ahora mismo*)	(S)he's coming right now
merito ayer nomás (Mex., i.e. *ayer mismo*)	only yesterday
Ahorita lo voy a hacer (i.e. *ahora mismo/ahora mismito*)	I'll do it straightaway (in practice it usually means 'when I can . . .')
Clarito la recuerdo	I remember her vividly
Reciencito llegó (Latin-American. See 35.7.2)	(S)he arrived just a minute ago
Las caras de los gringos son todititas igualitas (CF, Mex., dialogue)	Gringos' faces are all exactly the same

(1) The colloquial device of making adverbs more precise by adding a diminutive is much more common in Latin America. The *NGLE* 9.2b records *ahí* > *ahicito* 'just there', *apenas* > *apenitas* 'scarcely'/'hardly', *detrás* > *detrasito* 'right behind', *ahí nomasito* 'just there', none of these diminutives being heard in Spain.

43.3 'Augmentative' suffixes

Typical, in order of frequency, are *-ón/-ona*, *-azo/-aza*, *-ote/-ota*, *-aco/-aca*.

(**a**) These are mainly used to denote intensity or large size, often – but not always – with some idea of clumsiness, unpleasantness, awkwardness, excess, etc., as in *se me ha pegado un catarrazo* 'I've caught one heck of a cold' (*un catarro* = 'a cold'), *a través de la puerta, muchachones vestidos de negro y con el pelo al cero alborotaban* (JMa, Sp.) 'on the other side of the door some young toughs in black with shaved heads were causing a din', *¿dónde compraste esas pezuñotas?* 'where did you buy those clodhoppers?' (i.e. enormous shoes/boots, also *los zapatones*; *la pezuña* = 'hoof').

-azo can also imply admiration, as in *debes ser un profesorazo* 'you must be one heck of a teacher', *un exitazo* 'a great success', *un golazo* 'a brilliant goal' (in soccer).

Examples of augmentative suffixes:

amigo/amigote friend/ 'buddy' (not pejorative)
cursi/cursilón affected/incredibly affected
el coche/el cochazo car/'heck of a car'
grande/grandote big/pretty big (not really pejorative)
el soltero/el solterón bachelor/confirmed bachelor
fácil/facilón easy/facile
la ginebra/un ginebrazo gin/an enormous shot of gin
la palabra/la palabrota word/swear word
pedante/pedantón pedantic/insufferably pedantic
rico/ricachón rich/stinking rich, 'loaded'

Note that when *-ón* is added to a feminine noun the latter usually becomes masculine: *la cabeza* > *un cabezón* 'head' > 'big head', *noticia* > *noticion* 'news item' > 'sensational news item', *una chuleta* 'a meat chop'/'cutlet' > *un chuletón* 'large meat cutlet', *una fortuna* 'a fortune' > *un fortunón* 'an absolute fortune', *la fresa* 'strawberry' > *el fresón* 'large strawberry'.

-azo is also much used to form nouns which denote a blow or a flourish with some object:

el aldabón/el aldabonazo door knocker/thump of a knocker on the door
el codo/el codazo elbow/dig with the elbow
la bayoneta/el bayonetazo bayonet/bayonet thrust
el septembrazo the September coup/revolt

(**b**) To form an entirely new word. The suffix may then have no connotations of size or awkwardness and may even imply smallness:

la rata/el ratón rat/mouse (animal or computer*)
la calle/el callejón street/alleyway
la cintura/el cinturón waist/belt
el fuego/el fogón fire/stove
la cuerda/el cordón string/shoelace
la culebra/el culebrón grass-snake/soap opera
la tela/el telón cloth/theatre curtain

*In Latin America *el mouse*, plural *los mouses*, is often used for computer mouse.

(1) The suffix *-ón* is quite often used colloquially to form adjectives that usually, but not always, imply something repetitive or excessive, e.g. *contestón* 'always answering back', *coquetón* 'flirtatious', *preguntón* 'always asking questions', *comodón* 'easy-going'/'always seeking the easy way out', *peleón* 'always looking for a fight', *copión* 'copycat', *resultón* 'attractive' (see note 2), *respondón* 'cheeky'/'lippy', *ligón* 'flirtatious'/'constantly trying to "pull" women/men', *tardón* 'slowcoach'/'always late'. The feminine is formed regularly: *preguntona*, *ligona*, etc.

(2) *Resultón* is not easily translated. Applied to people it means something like 'not stunning but nevertheless attractive'. The term *guapetón* means the same applied to males, although *resultón* can be used for both sexes (feminine *resultona*). It can also be applied to non-living things like plays, films, gadgets, recipes as in *recetas fáciles y resultonas* 'easy recipes that do the job/hit the mark'.

43.4 Pejorative suffixes

These are not particularly commonly used and the words formed by them should be learned as separate items. Typical suffixes are *-aco*, *-arraco*, *-acho*, *-ajo*, *-astro*, *-uco*, *-ucho*, *-ejo* and a few others. They variously denote ugliness, wretchedness, dirtiness, meanness, etc.

el hotel/el hotelucho hotel/dingy hotel, flop house
el latín/el latinajo Latin/horrid Latin word
el libro/el libraco book/boring tome
el pájaro/el pajarraco bird/sinister, unpleasant bird
el poeta/el poetastro poet/rhymer/poetaster
el pueblo/el poblacho village/'dump', squalid village, dead-end town
la casa/la casucha house/hovel
la palabra/la palabreja word/horrible word
la ventana/el ventanuco window/tiny window

(1) Some of these suffixes can 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 (i.e. little girls) like them?'

The terms *la madrastra* 'stepmother', *el padrastro* 'stepfather' are not pejorative.

43.5 The suffix *-ata*

This suffix is quite common in familiar language among young people in Spain. Its effect is unpredictable: it may make a word sound popular, humorous or slangy, or it may simply be pejorative:

el bocadillo/el bocata sandwich (from a baguette)
el cuba libre/el cubata Cuba libre (the drink)
el ordenador/el ordenata computer. The *-ata* form is humorous or slang
socialista/el or *la sociata* socialist/'pinko', 'lefty'
la droga/el or *la drogata* drug/'junkie', 'drug addict'
ciego/cegata blind/short-sighted (colloquial)

44 Spelling, accent rules, punctuation and word division

This chapter discusses the following points:

- Alphabet and spelling (Section 44.1)
- Use of the written accent (Section 44.2)
- Upper- and lower-case letters (Section 44.3)
- Punctuation (Section 44.4)
- Division of words (Section 44.5)

For the phonetic symbols used in this chapter see the Preface.

44.1 Spelling

44.1.1 The Academy's spelling rules

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. This introduced several important changes, but more than 55 years later some pre-1959 spellings are still used by some editors and publishers. A new set of spelling rules appeared in 2010. It reaffirms the rules of 1959 with some additions which are mentioned at 44.2.4.

Among the more striking innovations of 1959 were the removal of the accent from the words *fui*, *fue*, *vi*, *dio*, *vio*, its adoption in words like *búho*, *rehúso*, *reúne*, *ahínca*, *aísla*, *prohíbe* (for the verbs affected see 16.9.1), and the decision to remove the accent from the pronouns *éste*, *ése* and *aquél* (see 7.3) and from the word *sólo* = 'only' (see 10.15).

44.1.2 The Spanish alphabet

Until 1994, the Spanish alphabet had 29 letters since the signs *ch* and *ll* were treated as separate single letters: as a result in alphabetical lists *mancha* followed *mancornas* and *collado* followed *colza*, etc. This was inconvenient for computerized sorting and out of line with other languages that use the Latin alphabet, so in April 1994 the tenth Conference of Academies of the Spanish Language voted to abolish *ch* and *ll* as separate letters. The Spanish alphabet therefore now has 27 letters. The names used in Spain and recommended by the Academy are:

a *a*	h *hache*	ñ *eñe*	u *u*
b *be*	i *i*	o *o*	v *uve*
c *ce*	j *jota*	p *pe*	w *uve doble*
d *de*	k *ka*	q *cu*	x *equis*
e *e*	l *ele*	r *erre*	y *ye* (formerly *i griega*)
f *efe*	m *eme*	s *ese*	z *zeta*
g *ge*	n *ene*	t *te*	

Double *r* (normally called *erre doble*) is a separate sound (rolled or trilled 'r'), but it is not treated as a separate letter of the alphabet.

(1) The names of *b*, *v*, *w*, *y* and *z* vary from country to country. *B* may be called *be*, *be alta* or *be larga. V* may be called *ve* (common in Latin America) or *uve* (normal in Spain); it may also be called *ve baja* or *ve corta* in Latin America since *v* and *b* sound the same in Spanish. *W* may be *uve doble*, *doble uve*, *ve doble* or *doble ve*. *Y* is still usually called *i griega* although the Academy prefers *ye. Z* may be *zeta* (preferred by the Academy), *zeda*, *ceta* or *ceda*.

(2) The Academy insists that accents should always be written on capital letters, a rule that is often broken because it creates awkwardly tall letters.

(3) Letters of the alphabet are all feminine – *la cu*, *la uve* – and one says *la/una a* and *la/una hache*, despite the rule that singular feminine words beginning with a stressed *a* sound require the articles *el/un*, cf. *el/un arma* (fem.) 'the/a weapon'. See 3.1.2 for discussion.

(4) For the Academy's recently recommended spellings of the words traditionally written *truhán*, *guión*, *crié*, *crió*, *frió*, *guié*, *guió* and similar words, see 44.2.4.

44.1.3 Relationship between sounds and letters

Spanish spelling is much more logical than French or English but not entirely rational. Basically, one sound corresponds to one letter except in the following cases:

B and V

B and *v* sound exactly the same and are pronounced as a voiced bilabial fricative [β], or like the English *b* after *n* or *m* or after a pause. The English sound [v] as in 'vat' does not exist in Spanish but English-speakers often wrongly distinguish *b* from *v* in pronunciation. For this reason they usually do not confuse these letters in writing.

Native speakers who are bad spellers make blunders like *tubo* for *tuvo* [tú-βo] 'had', *Premio *Nóvel* for *Premio Nóbel* [pɾé-myo-nó-βel] 'Nobel Prize', **el revelde* for *el rebelde* 'the rebel', mistakes which are at least the sign of a correct pronunciation.

C and Z

Z is pronounced [θ] (like the th of 'think') in standard European Spanish, like the s of 'sit' throughout Latin America, in southern Spain and in the Canary Islands. The sound [θ] – as it would be pronounced in Spain – is almost always written *c* before *i* or *e*: *cebra* [θé-βɾa/sé-βɾa] 'zebra', *hacer* [a-θéɾ/a-séɾ] 'to do/make', *nación* [na-θyón/na-syón] 'nation'. For this reason, a verb like *realizar* 'attain'/'achieve'/'bring about' undergoes spelling changes: *realizo*, *realice*, *realicé*, *realizó*, etc. See 16.4 for this and other spelling rules in the verb system.

Z appears before *e* or *i* only in a few words: *el eczema* (or *el eccema*) 'eczema', *la enzima* 'enzyme', *zeta* 'zed'/US 'zee', *Nueva Zelanda* (in Latin America *Nueva Zelandia*) 'New Zealand', *zigzag* (plural *zigzags*), *Zimbabue*, *zinc*, *zipizape* 'rumpus'/'fuss'/'noisy quarrel'.

Spelling in Latin America is therefore more troublesome than in Spain since pairs of words like *haz* 'do' and *as* 'ace', *ves* 'you see' and *vez* 'time' (as in 'three times'), *Sena* 'the river Seine' and *cena* 'supper' sound the same.

C, Qu and K

The sound of *c* in *cama* [k] is written *qu* before *e* and *i*: *querer* [ke-ɾéɾ] 'to want', *quiso* [kí-so] '(s)he wanted', *saqué* [sa-ké] 'I took out' (first-person preterite of *sacar*), etc. The letter *k* is therefore not needed in Spanish and is found only in foreign words, for example measurements preceded by *kilo-* and in such words as *kantiano* 'Kantian', *el anorak*, *el karaoke*, *el kiwi* [el-kí-βi] 'kiwi'/'kiwi fruit', *Kuwait* [ku-βáyt], *búnker* [búŋ-keɾ], etc. In the word *okupa* 'squatter' the unorthodox *k* suggests an alternative lifestyle.

The sound [kw] should always be written *cu*, e.g. *cuestión* [kwes-tyón] 'issue' (*la pregunta* = a question one asks), *cuáquero* [kwá-ke-ɾo] 'Quaker'. In 2010, the Academy recommended the following spellings: *cuark* 'quark', *cuásar* 'quasar', *cuórum* 'quorum'.

G, Gu- and Gü-

The sound of *g* in *tengo*, *hago* is written *gu* before *e* and *i*: *ruegue* [rrwé-ɣe] present subjunctive of *rogar* 'to request', *la guirnalda* [la-ɣiɾ-nál-da] 'wreath'/'garland'. The silent *u* in these words shows that the *g* is not pronounced like Spanish *j* [χ].

The syllables pronounced [gwe] and [gwi] are written *güe* and *güi*, e.g. *lingüístico* [liŋ-gwís-ti-ko], *el desagüe* [el-de-sá-ɣwe] 'drainage'/'water outlet', *averigüe* [a-ße-ɾí-ɣwe] present subjunctive of *averiguar* 'to check', *nicaragüense* [ni-ka-ɾa-ɣwén-se] 'Nicaraguan', *el pingüino* [el-piŋ-gwí-no] 'penguin'. This is the only use of the dieresis in the modern language.

H

H is always silent except in some rural dialects, but it is common in writing, where it is merely a burden on the memory. *H* had one useful function in the past: it showed that two vowels separated by *h* did not form a diphthong, as in words like *prohibe* [pɾo-í-βe] 'prohibits' or *buho* [bú-o] 'owl'. The Academy abolished this rule in 1959, so one must now write *prohíbe*, *búho*, *rehíla*, *la retahíla*, etc. This recommendation is now usually followed everywhere, at least in print.

The sound [w] at the beginning of a syllable is spelt *hu*: *huele* [wé-le] 'it smells', *ahuecar* [a-we-káɾ] 'to hollow out', *Náhuatl* [ná-watl] 'Nahuatl' (a native American language of Mexico), etc.

J

The sound [χ] (like *ch* in Scottish 'loch') is always written *j* before *a*, *o* and *u*, and is usually written *g* before *e* and *i*: *general* [χe-ne-ɾál], *Gibraltar* [χi-βɾal-táɾ], *rige* [rrí-χe] 'he/she/it rules', *rugir* [rru-χíɾ] 'to roar', etc. There are fairly numerous exceptions to the latter rule, e.g. irregular preterite and imperfect subjunctive forms of the type *dije/dijiste/dijeron/dijera*(*n*)*/dijese*(*n*) 'said', *traje/trajiste/trajeron/trajera*(*n*) 'brought', and of all verbs whose infinitive ends in *-ducir* (see 16.11.37), and many other words, e.g.:

la bujía spark plug
crujir to rustle/to crackle
dejé I left behind (from *dejar*)
el equipaje luggage
el garaje garage
la injerencia meddling/interference
la jeringa syringe
el jersey jersey
Jesús Jesus
Jiménez (a family name, also *Giménez*)
la jirafa giraffe
el paisaje landscape
el peaje toll (on a road or bridge)
tejer to weave
el traje suit
el ultraje outrage

Ll

Ll is properly a palatalized *l* [ʎ], but it is nowadays pronounced like the letter *y* by many speakers, although not everyone approves of this tendency, called *el yeísmo*. Poor spellers sometimes make mistakes like **cullo* for *cuyo* 'whose', **vállase* for *váyase* 'go away', and it is much better to pronounce it *y* than to pronounce it like the *lli* of 'million', which is written *li* in Spanish: *polio* [pó-ljo] 'polio' (the illness) and *pollo* [pó-ʎo] 'chicken (for eating)' sound quite different. In much of Argentina *ll* and consonantal *y* are pronounced like the s in 'measure'.

M

M is often pronounced *n* at the end of words by many, though not by all speakers: *el álbum* = [e-lál-βun] or [e-lál-βum] 'album', *el referéndum* = [el-rre-fe-ɾén-dun] 'referendum', *el ultimátum* = [e-lul-ti-má-tun] 'ultimatum'.

N

N is pronounced *m* before *b*, *v* and *p*: *en Barcelona* = [em-baɾ-θe-ló-na/em-baɾ-se-ló-na] 'in Barcelona', *invitar* = [im-bi-táɾ] 'to invite', *en París* = [em-pa-ɾís] 'in Paris'. It is pronounced [ŋ] (like ng in American and Southern British 'thing') before *q*, hard *c*, [χ], hard *g* and *k*: *inglés* [iŋ-glés], *monje* [móŋ-χe] 'monk', *en cambio* [eŋ-kám-byo], *sin querer* [siŋ-ke-ɾéɾ], *cien kilos* [θyeŋ-kí-los]/[syeŋ-kí-los].

P

The *p* in *septiembre* 'September' and *séptimo* 'seventh' is sometimes silent (but not in Mexico and usually not in Spain) and may be dropped in writing according to the Academy. But many, including *El País*, find the forms *setiembre*, *sétimo* unsightly, so the spelling with *p* is more common and the Academy admits that 'educated usage' prefers them.

Ps, Mn, Gn

Ps, *mn* and *gn* at the beginning of words are pronounced *s*, *m* and *n* and may, since the Academy's reform of 1959, be spelt simply *s-* and *n-*. But most people, including *El País Libro de estilo* 2014, item '*psico-*', cannot bring themselves to write *la sicología* for *la psicología* 'psychology' or *la siquiatría* for *la psiquiatría* 'psychiatry', and very few would write *nemónico* for *mnemónico* 'mnemonic', *la nosis* or *nóstico* for *la gnosis*, *gnóstico* 'gnosis', 'gnostic'. The older spellings *ps-*, *gn-*, *mn-* are still preferred, even by the Academy itself (cf. DPD p. 480). *El seudónimo* 'pseudonym' is, however, universally used and forms like *sicoanálisis*, *siquiatra*, *sicología* are used in the Latin America media.

R and Rr

R and *rr* represent a flapped *r* [ɾ] and a rolled (trilled) *r* [rr] respectively, and in a few words they indicate a difference of meaning, e.g. *pero* [pé-ɾo] 'but', *perro* [pé-rro] 'dog'; *caro* [ká-ɾo] 'dear', *carro* [ká-rro] 'car'/'cart'; *enteró* [en-te-ɾó] '(s)he informed', *enterró* [en-te-rró] '(s)he buried'.

But *r* is pronounced like *rr* (rolled/trilled) when it is the first letter in a word, e.g. *Roma* [rró-ma], *la ropa* [la-rró-pa] 'clothes', or when it occurs after *s*, *n* or *l*: *Israel* [is-rra-él], *la sonrisa* [la-son-rrí-sa] 'smile', *alrededor* [al-rre-ðe-ðór] '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.

Re-

If the prefix *re-* is added to a word beginning with *e* one of the *e*s may be dropped in writing: *re* + *emplazo* > *remplazo* or *reemplazo* 'replacement', *re* + *embolso* > *rembolso* or *reembolso* 'reimbursement'. The new spelling is seen, but not universally, in the Latin-American media, but the spelling with *ree-* is much more usual in Spain. The Academy's *Diccionario panhispánico de dudas* recommends retaining the double vowels. Some verbs, e.g. *reeligir* 'to re-elect' and *reenviar* 'to forward' (emails, post, etc.) seem never to be spelt with a single *e.*

X

In Spain, *x* (*equis*) is often pronounced *s* before a consonant: *extender* = [es-ten-dér] 'extend', *el extracto*, = [e-les-trák-to] 'extract', etc. Seco (1998, 459), rejects the pronunciation of *x* as [ks] in this position as 'affected', but Latin Americans insist on it, and it is spreading in Spain. For the pronunciation and spelling of place names like *México*, *mexicano*, *Oaxaca*, *Texas*, *Xcaret*, see 5.7.1, note 4.

The pronunciation [ks] is normal between vowels and at the end of words: *el examen* [e-lek-sá-men] 'examination', *el taxi* 'taxi' [el-ták-si], *el fax* [el-fáks] 'fax'. Learners should avoid popular pronunciations like [e-sá-men], [tá-si], often heard in Spain.

X is pronounced [s] at the beginning of words: *la xenofobia* [la-se-no-fó-βya] 'xenophobia', *el xilófono* [el-si-ló-fo-no] (colloquially *el xilofón* [el-si-lo-fón]) 'xylophone'.

@

For the use of the at-sign (*la arroba*, @) to stand for '*-o* or *-a*', thus creating gender-neutral forms (e.g. *l@s alumn@s* for 'male students and female students'), see 1.2.8 note 3.

44.1.4 *Trans-* or *-tras-*

Some uncertainty surrounds the spelling of words that begin with the prefix *trans-* or *tras-*. Educated usage, according to Seco (1998, 437), seems to be:

(**a**) usually *trans-*

transalpino	*transferencia*	*transmediterráneo*	*transpirar*
transatlántico	*transferir*	*transmigración*	*transpirenaico*
transbordar	*transformación*	*transmisión*	*transportar*
transbordo	*transformar*	*transmitir*	*transporte*
transcribir	*transfusión*	*transparencia*	*transposición*
transcripción	*transgredir*	*transparentar*	*transversal*
transcurrir	*transgresión*	*transparente*	
transcurso	*transgresor*	*transpiración*	

(**b**) usually *tras-*

trascendencia	*trascender*	*trasvasar*
trascendente	*trasponer*	*trascendental*

(**c**) always *tras-*

trasfondo	*trasluz*	*trasplantar*	*trastornar*
trashumancia	*trasnochar*	*trasplante*	*trastorno*
trashumante	*traspapelar*	*traspunte*	*trastrocar*
trasladar	*traspasar*	*trasquilar*	*trastrueque*
traslado	*traspaso*	*trastienda*	
traslucir	*traspié*	*trastocar*	

(1) In the case of (a) and (b) the alternative spellings in *tras-* and *trans-* are 'tolerated' by the Academy but are not in general use.

44.1.5 Common non-Castilian forms

(**a**) Words written in the other official languages of Spain are nowadays often seen in Spanish texts printed in Castilian. Common pronunciations are:

-aig, *-eig*, *-oig*, *-uig* (Catalan): -ach, -ech, -och, -uch
g (Basque): like g in English 'get'
g before *i* or *e* (Catalan, Galician): like s in 'pleasure'
h (Catalan, Galician, Basque): silent
tz (Basque): like ts in 'cats'
x (Catalan, Galician, Basque): like sh in 'ship'
j (Basque): Castilian j
j (Catalan, Galician) like s in 'pleasure'
l·l (Catalan): double l (not as Castilian *ll*)
ny (Catalan): like Castilian *ñ*
tx (Basque, Catalan): like Castilian *ch*
z (Basque): like Castilian s
z (Catalan): like English z

For the pronunciation of x in Mexican place names, see 5.7.1, note 4.

(**b**) Grammarians often recommend that foreign words should be spelt according to their Spanish pronunciation, e.g. *güisqui* for *whisky*, *yip* for *jeep*, *yóquey* or *yoqui* for *jockey*, *tique* for *ticket* (see note 1), etc. Such forms are found in dictionaries and in some writers, but since they tend to imply ignorance of foreign languages they may have a slightly embarrassing appearance. *El País* prefers *béisbol* (usual everywhere), *biquini*, *cóctel* (usual everywhere), *coñá* (for *cognac*), *esprín* ('sprint'), *suéter* (usual everywhere), *gánster*, *pipermín* ('peppermint'), *poni* ('pony'), *póquer*, *rali* ('rally'), *tique*, *yacusi*, *yóquey*, but permits *ballet*, *hockey*, *lady* (not *ladi*), *motocross* (not *motocrós*), *striptease*, *thriller*, *whisky*, *yuppy*.

(1) Several words for 'ticket' are used in Spain. *Un billete* is for travel. *Una entrada* is for places of entertainment like museums, cinemas, theatres. *Un tique* or *un ticket* allows the holder to use facilities, e.g. toll roads, car parks, cloakrooms, dry cleaners, left-luggage offices; it is also often the receipt in shops and stores. *El boleto* seems to cover most types of ticket in Latin America but it is not used in Spain.

44.2 The written accent

The Academy and grammarians in general call both the curly sign over an *ñ* and the acute accent over vowels *la tilde*. In everyday language *el acento* is used as well as *la tilde* for the acute accent.

44.2.1 General rules

Native Spanish-speakers are often careless about the use of the written accent in handwriting, but in printing and formal writing the rules must be observed. The basic rules are:

(**a**) if the word ends in a consonant other than *n* or *s* and the stress falls on the last syllable no written accent is required: *contes**tad*** 'answer!', *Ma**drid***, *natu**ral***, *Para**guay***, *ha**blar*** 'to talk';

(**b**) if the word ends in a vowel or *n* or *s* and the stress falls on the last syllable but one, no written accent is required. Examples: *la **ca**lle* 'street', *el **jue**go*, 'game', ***ha**blan* 'they speak', *la i**ma**gen* 'image', ***ha**blas* 'you talk', ***Fran**cia* 'France' (see 44.2.2 for diphthongs);

(**c**) in all other cases the position of the stress must be shown in writing by an acute accent.

el álbum album
alérgicamente allergically
contéstenles answer them (*ustedes* imperative)
colocó (s)he placed
decídmelo tell me it (*vosotros* imperative)
difícil difficult
dirán they will say
fácil easy
las imágenes images
la nación nation
la química chemistry
el récord record (in sports)
el rehén hostage
la/las síntesis synthesis/syntheses
las vírgenes virgins

(d) Words of one syllable do not have an accent except for those shown at 44.2.7. For this reason one writes *fui*, *fue*, *dio*, *pie*, *fe*, and, since the end of 2010, *guion* for *guión* 'script' [gjón], *rio* for '(s)he laughed' [rryó] and *truhan* for *truhán* 'rascal' [trwán]. See 44.2.4 for more on this subject.

(1) It follows from these rules that all Spanish words stressed more than two syllables from the end must have a written accent on the stressed vowel: *háganmelo*, *teléfono*, *el régimen*, etc.

(2) Words ending in two consonants of which the second is *s* (all of them foreign words) are stressed on the last syllable: *Orleans*, *los complots* 'plots', *los cabarets* 'cabarets'. *El/los fórceps* 'forceps', *el/los bíceps* 'biceps' and *los récords* (in sport, etc.) are exceptions.

(3) When, as happens in archaic or very flowery styles, an object pronoun is added to a stressed final vowel, the accent on the vowel should be dropped: *acabó* + *se* = *acabose* for *se acabó* 'it ended', *habrase visto* 'did you ever!?' = *habrá* + *se*; see 14.3.1 note 2 for a discussion of this construction. This is the Academy's recommendation, but many printers still use the accent, as did *El País* until recently. It now recommends spellings like *acabose*, *pidiome*, which many find disconcerting.

When one pronoun is added to an imperative the accent is not written if it becomes unnecessary, e.g. *detén* 'stop' but *detenlos* 'stop them'. This rule is generally observed. For *dele* or *déle* 'give him/her', see 44.2.7 note 1.

(4) If a word bearing a written accent is joined to another to form a compound, any acute accent on the first word is discarded: *tío* + *vivo* = *tiovivo* 'merry-go-round', *balón* + *cesto* = *baloncesto* 'basketball', *décimo* 'tenth' + *séptimo* 'seventh' = *decimoséptimo* 'seventeenth'.

44.2.2 Diphthongs, triphthongs and the position of the stress

Spanish vowels are divided into two types:

(1) Strong vowels
i when pronounced as in *ti*
u when pronounced as in *tú*
a, *e*, *o* in any position

(2) Semi-vowels
i when pronounced [y] as in *bien*, and *y* as in *voy*
u when pronounced [w] as in *bueno*, *causa*

Vowels may appear in combinations of two or three, e.g. *eai*, *au*, *uai*, *iai*, *ee*, *ao*, etc. An intervening *h* is disregarded, so that *au* and *ahu*, *ua* and *uha*, *ai* and *ahi*, etc., are treated the same way – at least

since the publication of the Academy's *Nuevas normas* in 1959. Thus *la buhardilla* [la-βwaɾ-ðí-ʎa] 'attic apartment', *rehusar* [rrew-sáɾ] 'to refuse', *cohibido* [koy-βí-ðo] 'timid'/'inhibited'.

(**a**) When two or more strong vowels appear side by side, they are, in careful speech, pronounced as separate syllables and do not form diphthongs or triphthongs:

leo [lé-o] I read
créamelo [kɾé-a-me-lo] believe me
pasee [pa-sé-e] pres. subjunctive of *pasear* 'to go for a walk'
moho [mó-o] mildew
Seoane [se-o-á-ne] (a personal surname)
creí [kɾe-í] I believed
aún [a-ún] still/yet

(b) A combination, in either order, of a strong vowel and 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 and require no written accent:

arduo [áɾ-ðwo] arduous
continuo [kon-tí-nwo] continuous
erais [é-ɾays] you were
Francia [frán-θya/fɾán-sya] France
la historia [lays-tó-ɾya] history/story
la lengua [la-léŋ-gwa] tongue/language
hablabais [a-βlá-βays] you were speaking
produjisteis [pɾo-ðu-χís-teys] you produced
causan [káw-san] they cause
fuego [fwé-ɣo] fire

and the following words do not follow these rules and therefore require a written accent:

amáis [a-máys] you love
debéis [de-βéys] you owe
continúo [kon-ti-nú-o] I continue
hacías [a-θí-as/así-as] you were doing
volvió [bol-βyó] (s)he returned
sonreí [son-rre-í] I smiled

(**c**) If a semi-vowel is added to a diphthong, a triphthong is formed. Triphthongs are also counted as a single vowel when deciding where a written accent should appear:

continuáis [kon-ti-nwáys] you continue (three syllables)
las vieiras [las-βyéy-ɾas] scallops (two syllables, a Galician word. Also called *zamburriñas*)
cambiáis [kam-byáys] you change (two syllables)

(1) Students of Portuguese must remember that the latter language has the opposite rule and writes *colónia*, *história*, but *temia* (all stressed the same as the Spanish *colonia*, *historia*, *temía*).

(2) Words ending in a vowel + *y* are considered to end in a consonant and therefore are naturally stressed on the last syllable: *Paraguay*, *Uruguay*, *el convoy* 'convoy' (also sometimes 'railway train').

(3) The soccer stadium in Madrid, *el Bernabeu*, and other names ending in a diphthong such as *Berneu* and *Palau* ought to be spelt with an accent on the penultimate vowel, which is stressed. But these Catalan names are not written with an accent in their home language and therefore not usually in Castilian.

44.2.3 Written accent on stressed diphthongs, triphthongs 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 two possibilities:

(a) If the combination is strong vowel and semi-vowel (in either order) the stress falls predictably on the strong vowel, so the following require no written accent:

vais [báys] you go (*vosotros* form)
el aire [e-láy-ɾe] the air
el peine [el-péy-ne] comb
la causa [la-káw-sa] cause
El Cairo [el-káy-ro] Cairo
alcaloide [al-ka-lóy-ðe] alkaloid
fui [fwí] I was/I went
huido [wí-ðo] fled (from *huir* 'to flee')
la viuda [la-βyú-ða] widow
la ruina [la-rrwí-na] ruin
tiene [tyé-ne] (s)he has (from *tener*)
luego [lwé-ɣo] then/later
la tiara [la-tya-ɾa] tiara
acuoso [a-kwó-so] watery
vio [byó] (s)he saw
dio [dyó] (s)he gave
el pie [el-pyé] foot

and the following are exceptions to rule (a):

el país [el-pa-ís] country
el baúl [el-βa-úl] trunk/large suitcase
reír [rre-ír] to laugh
reís [rre-ís] you (*vosotros*) laugh
el dúo [el-dú-o] duet/duo
el búho [el-βú-o] owl
el frío [fɾí-o] cold
reúne [rre-ú-ne] (s)he unites/brings together
prohíbe [pɾo-í-βe] (s)he prohibits
heroína [e-ɾo-í-na] heroine/heroin
el arcaísmo [e-laɾ-ka-ís-mo] archaism
ahí [a-í] there
oís [o-ís] you (*vosotros*) hear
ríe [rrí-e] (s)he laughs (from *reír*)
se fía [se-fí-a] (s)he trusts (from *fiarse*)

(b) If the combination is strong vowel + strong vowel the two vowels form separate syllables, so the following are stressed predictably:

los jacarandaes [los-χa-ka-ɾan-dá-es] jacaranda trees (old plural of *el jacarandá*, now *los jacarandás*)
los noes [los-nó-es] noes (plural of *no*)
el caos [el-ká-os] chaos
feo [fé-o] ugly
leen [lé-en] they read
la boa [la-βó-a] boa (the snake may be *el boa* in Latin America)
el azahar [e-la-θáɾ/ e-la-sáɾ] orange blossom

See 44.2.2a for more examples:

and the following are exceptions to rule (**b**);

aéreo [a-é-ɾe-o] air (adjective)
el león [el-le-ón] lion
el deán [el-de-án] dean (ecclesiastical)
el rehén [el-rre-én] hostage

(1) *Huido*, *construido* and other words ending in *-uido* are stressed regularly because the *ui* is the diphthong [wi]; but 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.e. the *i* is not pronounced [y].

(2) Words like *rió* or *rio* (s)he laughed, *crié* or *crie* 'I created' are problematic and are discussed in the next section.

(3) As mentioned in 44.2.2c, a triphthong is treated like a single vowel for the purpose of determining the position of the stress, so that *continuáis* [kon-tin-wáys] (from *continuar* 'to continue') and all second-person plural verb forms of more than one syllable ending in *-áis* or *éis* are exceptions and require an accent. However, *bueyes* [bwéy-es] 'oxen', *las leyes* [las-lé-yes] 'laws' and similar words are regularly stressed on the penultimate syllable and therefore require no accent.

44.2.4 *Guión* or *guion*? *Fió* or *fio*? *Lié* or *lie*?

The Academy's spelling rules clearly state that words of one syllable must be written without an accent (see 44.2.7 note 1 for exceptions like *té* 'tea', *tú* 'you', *más* 'more'). For this reason words like

bien [byén], *buen* [bwén], *la sien* [la-syén] 'temple' (on the side of the head), *el pie* [pyé] 'foot', *la fe* [la-fé] 'faith' and *pues* [pwés] 'then'/'well . . .' are not written with an accent.

In 1959, the Academy extended this rule to the preterites of *ser*, *ver* and *dar* – *fui*, *fue*, *vio*, *dio* – on the grounds that they also are pronounced as one syllable: [fwí], [fwé], [byó], [dyó]. Publishers and editors everywhere have now adopted the unaccented forms.

Like many well-intentioned reforms this new rule seems to have had unforeseen consequences since certain other words may be pronounced as one syllable despite having always been written with an accent on the final vowel. This affects words like the following:

crié, *crió*, *criáis*, *criéis* [kɾyé], [kɾyó], [kɾyáys], [kɾyéys] from *criar* 'to breed'/'raise' (e.g. children)
fié, *fió*, *fiáis*, *fiéis* [fyé], [fyó],[fyáys],[fyéys] from *fiar* 'to sell on credit'; *fiarse* 'to trust'
fluí, *fluís* [flwí], [flwís] from *fluir* 'to flow'
frió, *friáis* [fɾyó], [fɾyáys] from *freír* 'to fry'
guié, *guió*, *guiáis*, *guiéis* [gyé], [gyó], [gyáys], [gyéys] from *guiar* 'to guide'
guión [gyón] 'script'
huí, *huís* [wí], [wís] from *huir* 'to flee'
lié/*lió*/*liáis*/*liéis* [lyé], [lyó, [lyáys], [lyéys] from *liar* 'to roll up'/'to bundle'
rió, *riáis* [ryó], [ryáys] from *reír* 'to laugh'
truhán [tɾwán] 'rascal', 'knavish'

The Academy now recommends that the words listed, and a few other words like *muon*, *ion*, etc., should be written without an accent so as to reflect their widespread monosyllabic pronunciation: *crie*, *crio*, *rio*, *fiais*, *guio*, *guion*, *hui*, *huis*, *lie*, *liais*, *truhan*, etc. The present grammar adopts the new spelling. However, the Academy admits that many Spanish-speakers pronounce these words as two syllables: [ri-ó], [gi-é], [gi-ón], [li-éjs], etc. It does not consider this pronunciation to be incorrect but insists that no accent should be written.

The new rules are spreading slowly. *El País* of Spain and some well-known publishers have adopted them, as have recent versions of Microsoft Word's spelling checker; but *La Jornada* (Mex.), *La Nación* (Arg.), *Abc* (Sp.) had apparently not adopted them by mid-2018, and *La Vanguardia* (Sp.) and *Granma* (Cu.) seem to apply them inconsistently.

44.2.5 Written accent: some common doubtful cases

The following forms are recommended (where *el/la* precedes the noun the latter may refer to a male or a female; when no accent is written the stressed vowel is shown in bold):

*la acrob**a**cia* acrobatics
*afrodisi**a**co* aphrodisiac; see note 7
*amoni**a**co* or *amoníaco* ammonia; see note 7
*austri**a**co* Austrian; see note 7
*cardi**a**co* or *cardíaco* cardiac; see note 7
el cartel or *cártel* drugs cartel
el/la chófer driver; see note 1
el cóctel cocktail
*disp**o**nte* familiar imperative of *disponerse* 'to get ready'; see note 3
el fútbol soccer; see note 5
*hipocondr**i**aco* hypochondriac see note 7
*ib**e**ro* (less commonly *íbero*) Iberian
el láser laser
la metempsicosis metempsychosis
*el mete**o**ro* meteor
*el mis**i**l* (less commonly *mísil*) missile
*la olimpi**a**da* Olympiad
la ósmosis or *osm**o**sis* osmosis
*polici**a**co* police (adjective; see note 7)
el/la políglota polyglot
*el/la psiqui**a**tra* psychiatrist
el géiser geyser (geological)
el omóplato shoulder blade
*la quirom**a**ncia* palmistry/hand-reading; see note 6
*el rept**i**l* reptile
*el re**ú**ma* rheumatism (also *el reuma*)
el sánscrito Sanskrit
*el termost**a**to* thermostat
la tortícolis stiff neck

*el electr**o**do* electrode
etíope Ethiopian
la exégesis or *la exegesis* exegesis
el frijol bean; see note 4
*el pab**i**lo* wick (of a candle)
el parásito parasite
*el/la pedi**a**tra* paediatrician/US pediatrician
*el peri**o**do* or *período* period
la utopía utopia
el vídeo is usually *video* in Latin America
*el zodi**a**co* zodiac; see note 7

Some 'mispronunciations' are common in speech, e.g. *s**o**viet* 'Soviet', *el ocea**a**no* 'ocean' (written and correctly pronounced *el océano*).

(1) Written and pronounced *chofer* [cho-fér] in Latin America.
(2) *El dínamo* in some Latin-American countries, including Argentina and Cuba.
(3) Similarly *componte* 'compose yourself', *detente* 'stop'.
(4) *El frijol* is more common than *el fríjol*.
(5) *El fut**bol*** is heard in some Latin-American countries.
(6) Likewise all words ending in *-mancia* that have the meaning 'divination'.
(7) *El País* prefers the unaccented form of words ending in *-iaco*, i.e. not *-íaco*, but everyday usage is variable.

44.2.6 Accent on interrogative forms

In the case of some words, the form used in direct and indirect questions has an accent. These words are: *cómo* 'how', *cuál* 'which', *cuándo* 'when', *cuánto* 'how much', *dónde* 'where', *qué* 'what/which', *quién* 'who'. Chapter 28 gives further details.

44.2.7 Accent used to distinguish words having identical pronunciations

In the case of some two dozen common words the written accent merely eliminates ambiguities:

	without accent	**with accent**
de/dé (see note 1)	of	3rd-person singular present subjunctive of *dar*
el/él	the (def. article)	he/it
este/éste, ese/ése, aquel/aquél: see 6.3		
mas/más	but (rare)	more
mi/mí	my	me (after prepositions)
se/sé	reflexive pronoun	(1) I know, (2) *tú* imperative of *ser*
si/sí	if	(1) yes, (2) prepositional form of *se*
solo/sólo (see 9.15)	alone	only (*solamente*)
te/té	object form of *tú*	tea
tu/tú	your	you

(1) *Dé* ought to lose its accent if a pronoun is attached and the stress becomes regular: *denos*, 'give us', *deme* 'give me', etc. However, the spellings *déme*, *déles*, etc. are often seen.

(2) The Academy no longer recommends that *o* 'or' should take an accent when it appears between two numerals, as in *4 o 2* '4 or 2'. See 37.2.

(3) *Aun* 'even' [áwn] and *aún* 'still'/'yet' [a-ún] are pronounced differently.

44.3 Upper- and lower-case letters

44.3.1 Upper-case letters

Capital letters are used less than in English. They are written:

(**a**) At the beginning of sentences, as in English.

(**b**) With proper nouns, but not with the adjectives derived from them: *Madrid*, but *la vida madrileña* 'Madrid life'; *Colombia*, *la cocina colombiana* 'Colombian cooking'; *Shakespeare*, *el lenguaje shakesperiano* '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 Republicano* 'The Republican 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* 'the Hague'. But 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 a discussion of this use of the article.

44.3.2 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', *martes* 'Tuesday', *jueves* 'Thursday', *viernes* 'Friday', 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* 'Muslims', *los judíos* 'Jews', 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. Garcia', *el 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', *La guerra de las galaxias* 'Star Wars', *Vida de Manuel Rosas* 'The Life of Manuel Rosas', etc. But the titles of newspapers and magazines are capitalized: *El País*, *La Nación*, *Ordenador Personal* 'Personal Computer', etc.

(**e**) 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.

44.4 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.

44.4.1 Full stops/periods and commas

The full stop/US period (*el punto*) is used as in English, except that abbreviations are usually always written with a full stop:

English	**Spanish**
Dr Moreno	*Dr. Moreno*
Sr González	*Sr. González*

For the use of points and commas in writing numbers, see 11.1 note 3.

(1) Commas are not written before the conjunction *y* in a series of words: *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 Remedios es chilena* 'Juan is Uruguayan and Remedios is Chilean'.

44.4.2 Colons

Colons (*dos puntos*) are used as in English except that they often appear after salutations in letters: *Muy Sr. mío*: (the formula used in the Southern Cone is *De mi consideración:*) 'Dear Sir', *Querida Ana*: 'Dear Ana'. A comma can be used in this context, especially in informal letters.

44.4.3 Semi-colons

Semi-colons (*punto y coma*) are used much as in English, and they are often used after a series of commas to denote a longer pause:

Tenía pan, huevos y vino; pero no tenía carne	(S)he had bread, eggs and wine, but (s)he had no meat
Miguel entró cansado, confuso; Celia le siguió, radiante y orgullosa.	Miguel came in, tired, confused; Celia followed him, radiant and proud

The semi-colon is also often used before phrases like *sin embargo/no obstante* 'nevertheless', *a pesar de esto* 'despite this' that are themselves often followed by a comma:

Les escribí más de una vez; sin embargo, no me contestaron	I wrote to them more than once. However, they did not reply

Seco (1998, 369), notes that the semi-colon is often used before words like 'but' to separate long clauses, as in *el camino no ofrecía grandes peligros; pero no me atreví* 'the trail presented no great dangers, but I didn't have the courage'.

44.4.4 Quotations and the representation of dialogue

There is no clear agreement over the use of *comillas* or inverted commas.

(**a**) Chevrons (« » *comillas francesas* or *comillas angulares*) are little used nowadays. The *Libro de estilo* of *El País* 2014, 12.3.3, requires use of " " for quoted material and ' ' for quotations within quotations. This convention is used in many publications.

Single quotation marks are much used to enclose isolated words: *la palabra 'esnob' viene del inglés* 'the word "snob" comes from English'.

(**b**) There are three types of dash in Spanish:

el guion (see 44.2.4 for spelling)	hyphen	short -
el signo de menos	minus sign	medium length –
la raya	dash	double length —

In the representation of continuous dialogue inverted commas are not used, the words spoken being introduced by a *raya* or by a shorter dash.

A *raya* marks the beginning of dialogue, a change of speaker or a resumption of dialogue after an interruption: *—Ahora váyase— dijo—, y no vuelva más hasta que yo le avise*.

Except for question and exclamation marks, punctuation at the end of a string of 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* (GGM, Col.).

44.4.5 Question and exclamation marks

As far as we know, Castilian is unique among the world's languages in that questions and exclamations are always introduced by upside-down question or exclamation marks and followed by normal question and exclamation marks (this system is optional in Catalan but is now officially rejected in Galician). The justification for the Castilian system is that it gives readers an advance warning of when to use the right intonation. Words not included in the question or exclamation are written outside the signs:

Oye, ¿quieres una cerveza?	Hey, d'you want a beer?
Hace calor, ¿verdad?	It's hot, isn't it?
Si te digo que no he gastado más que doscientos dólares, ¿me vas a creer?	If I tell you I've only spent 200 dollars, will you believe me?
Pero, ¡qué estupidez! (not *¡pero qué estupidez!*)	But what stupidity!
¡Lo voy a hacer! ¿Me oyes?	I'm going to do it! Do you hear me?

Mixing of these signs is allowed but is rare: *¿qué estás haciendo?!* 'what are you doing?!'

The Academy, *NGLE* 42.6h, recommends that the name of a person addressed should not be left outside the question or exclamation marks: *¿qué dices, Marco?*, not *¿qué dices? Marco*.

44.4.6 Hyphens

Hyphens (*los guiones*) are used sparingly since compound words are usually written as single words: *latinoamericano* (not **latino-americano*), *antisubmarino* 'anti-submarine', *hispanohablante* 'Spanish-speaking', *posmoderno* 'post-modern', *ultraligero* 'ultra-light', *superinteligente* 'super-intelligent', etc.

Hyphens are used between compound adjectives in which each part represents separate things or people (not the case, for example, in *latinoamericano*). Only the second of two adjectives agrees in number and gender:

las guerras árabe-israelíes	the Arab-Israeli wars
las negociaciones anglo-francesas	Anglo-French negotiations
el complejo militar-industrial	the military-industrial complex

A hyphen may be used to join two nouns:

los misiles superficie-aire	surface-to-air missiles
la carretera Madrid-Barcelona	the Madrid–Barcelona road

But hyphens are not used in compound nouns of the sort *el perro policía* 'police-dog', *el año luz* 'light year', *la conexión Bluetooth* 'Bluetooth connection'.

(1) In 2010 the Academy decreed that *ex* should not take a hyphen, so one should now write *exalcalde* 'former mayor', *exfuncionario* 'ex-government employee', *exmarido/exesposo* 'ex-husband', *exjefe* 'former chief/boss', *exnovia* 'ex-girlfriend'. *Ex preso* or *ex-preso* 'ex-convict' is an exception to avoid confusion with *expreso* 'express'. If what follows *ex* is a compound noun consisting of more than one word, a space is used: *ex primer ministro*, *ex ministro de Agricultura*. *El/la ex* can be used as a noun: *Manolo es mi ex* 'Manolo is my ex'.

The same rule also applies to prefixes like *pos-* 'post-', and *pro-* 'pro-', e.g. *la posguerra* 'the post-war period', *el hospital prociegos* 'the hospital for the blind'.

A hyphen is used if the following word begins with a capital letter: *pro-Kennedy*, *pro-Cataluña* 'pro-Catalonia'.

44.5 Division of words at end of line

A knowledge of the structure of Spanish syllables is necessary for a good pronunciation and failure to follow the rules in speech helps to create a foreign accent. As far as word division at the end of a line is concerned, the following rules apply:

(**a**) *Ch*, *ll*, *qu*, *gue*, *gui*, *rr* and the following combinations of consonants are not divided (but see (**d**) for more on *rr*):

br	*cr*	*fr*	*gr*	*pr*	*dr*	*tr*
bl	*cl*	*fl*	*gl*	*pl*		

(**b**) Bearing in mind that the combinations listed under (**a**) are not divided and count as single consonants, a single consonant is grouped with the following vowel:

ha-ba	*ro-ca*	*nu-do*	*a-gua*	*pe-lo*	*ra-za*	*mar-ca*
mu-cho	*ca-lle*	*pe-rro*	*ca-bra*	*co-fre*	*o-tro*	*co-pla*
sa-que	*pa-gue*	*de-sa-güe*	*é-xi-to* pronounced [ék-si-to]			

and no syllable begins with more than one consonant:

cal-do	*cos-ta*	*cuan-do*	*par-te*	*can-cha*
Es-pa-ña	*hem-bra*	*em-ble-ma*	*com-bi-nar*	*in-na-to*
re-cla-mar	*con-lle-var*	*cons-truc-ción*	*ins-pec-tor*	*re-hén*
blan-den-gue				

(**c**) *El País* advises against separating vowels, and this is the easiest rule to remember:

viu-do	*cié-na-ga*	*teo-cra-cia*	*can-táis*	*a-ma-bais*
bue-no	*ha-cia*	*pe-río-do*	*ha-cía-mos*	*con-ti-núas*

(**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*.

(1) The Academy states that when a word is clearly divisible on etymological grounds it may be divided accordingly: this usually affects prefixes. ?*Su-bya-cen-te* for *sub-ya-cen-te* 'underlying' is unnatural. Further examples:

de-sa-gra-da-ble or *des-a-gra-da-ble* disagreeable
sub-rep-ti-cio (better than *su-brep-t-i-cio*) surreptitious
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 (familiar plural)

(2) Any of these rules is overridden to avoid a comical or embarrassing effect. One does not write *sa-cerdote*, *cal-culo*, *dis-puta*, *al ser-vicio del gobierno*.

(3) There is some disagreement over the combination *tl*. The rule is that it is optionally separable but usually inseparable in Latin America. It is inseparable in Mexican words like *Tenochtitlán* because *tl* is a single consonant in the Nahuatl language of the Aztecs.

(4) Foreign words should be divided according to the rules used in the language of origin.

(5) Words containing the sequence *interr-* or *contrarr-* are divided thus at the end of a line: *inter-relacionado* (*inter-* is the first part of the compound), *contra-revolucionario* (*contra-* is the first part of the compound).

Glossary of grammatical terms

Many terms are already defined in the text of the grammar at the section shown. Words printed in capital letters are defined elsewhere in the Glossary. Spanish grammatical terms vary widely according to the preferences of grammarians and teachers: the Spanish equivalents shown here are, with a couple of exceptions, those used in the Academy's *NGLE* (*Nueva gramática de la lengua española*). It must be remembered that the Spanish word *pretérito* simply means 'past' and not 'preterite'.

accent ***el acento*** — see TILDE, STRESS

active voice ***la voz activa*** — the form of the verb in which the subject of the verb really performs the action, e.g. '**Mike painted** the kitchen' as opposed to the passive 'the kitchen was painted by Mike' in which the kitchen is the subject but not the agent of the action. See Chapter 32 for more details.

adjectival participle ***el participio adjetival*** — defined in Section 23.6.

adjective ***el adjetivo*** — a word that describes a NOUN or PRONOUN, e.g. 'a **red** book'/*un libro* ***rojo***, 'you're **tall**'/*eres* ***alto***.

adverb(ial) ***el adverbio/el adverbial*** — a word or phrase that modifies a VERB, ADJECTIVE or ADVERB, often giving extra information on **how, when, where** or **why**: 'she came **yesterday**'/*vino* ***ayer***, 'I left it **here**'/*lo dejé* ***aquí***, 'it's **totally** untrue'/*es* ***completamente*** *falso*, *'to work* **in vain**'/*trabajar* ***en balde***, '**fairly** well'/***bastante*** *bien*.

agreement ***la concordancia*** — the rules whereby a feature of one word is repeated or echoed in other related words. In English, verbs usually agree in person and number, so we must say 'he is' and not *'he are'. Spanish verbs have similar but stronger rules. Spanish ARTICLES and ADJECTIVES agree in number and gender with NOUNS and PRONOUNS: ***la*** *casa blanca* 'the white house', *él es guapo* 'he is good-looking', *ellas son guapas* 'they (females) are good-looking', etc.

antecedent ***el antecedente*** — the noun or pronoun that a RELATIVE CLAUSE refers to, e.g. '**the woman** who lives over the road'/***la mujer*** *que vive al otro lado de la calle*.

anterior preterite ***el pretérito anterior*** — a Spanish verb tense with no exact equivalent in English, e.g. *hube terminado*, defined at 18.4.

apposition ***la aposición*** — the use of a phrase to extend or clarify the meaning of a NOUN PHRASE without being connected to it by a PREPOSITION: 'Paris, **the capital of France**'/*París,* ***capital de Francia***. See 3.2.25.

article ***el artículo*** — the grammatical name given to the words 'the' and 'a(n)' in English, and *el/la/los/las* and *un/una/unos/unas* in Spanish, as in '**the** fox ate **a** duck'/***el*** *zorro se comió* ***un*** *pato.* Words meaning 'the' are called 'definite articles'/*el artículo definido*, and words meaning 'a(n)' are 'indefinite articles'/*el artículo indefinido*. See Chapters 3 and 4.

aspect ***el aspecto (verbal)*** regardless of *when* they occur**,** events can have other qualities: they may be completed or finished ('I broke my leg', 'I will have finished my exams by then'), or incomplete at the time ('the sky was blue'), or 'continuous' ('I was smoking a cigar') or 'non-continuous' ('I smoked a cigar'). These features are described by many linguists as differences of verbal 'aspect'. It has been claimed that the Spanish PRETERITE and IMPERFECT reflect a difference between completed and non-completed aspect. However, other experts deny this and this book avoids the term since it is controversial and not very helpful to learners. See Chapter 17, especially 17.4, for more on this point.

augmentative suffix ***el sufijo aumentativo*** suffixes like *-ón*, *-azo* that indicate, among other things, large size. See 43.3. English does not have augmentative suffixes.

auxiliary verb ***el verbo auxiliar*** **(1)** a VERB used in combination with the PAST PARTICIPLE of another verb to form a COMPOUND TENSE. In English the auxiliary used is 'to have' as in 'I **have** drunk it'; in Spanish it is *haber*, as in *lo* ***he*** *bebido*, or, more rarely *tener*. See 18.1.3. **(2)** A VERB such as *poder*, *deber*, *tener que* which is added to an INFINITIVE to mean such things as 'to be able to . . .', 'to have to . . .', etc. In some accounts, *ser* in passive sentences – *era considerada muy inteligente* 'she was considered very intelligent' – is also classified as an auxiliary verb.

cardinal number ***el número cardinal*** the form of a number used for counting: 'one, two, three'; 'I bought **eight** novels'/*compré* ***ocho*** *novelas*.

clause ***la cláusula*** a part of a SENTENCE which itself contains a FINITE VERB. A MAIN CLAUSE can stand on its own as a separate sentence, a SUBORDINATE CLAUSE cannot. In 'your car is parked where you left it yesterday', 'your car is parked' is a main clause, 'where you left it yesterday' is a subordinate clause dependent on the main clause. Sentences therefore consist either of a main clause alone – 'John likes music' – or a main clause plus one or more subordinate clauses, e.g. 'John likes listening to music **when he's at home**'.

cleft sentence ***las construcciones relativas de relieve*** **or** ***las fórmulas relativas de relieve*** or ***las construcciones copulativas enfáticas*** defined at 41.1.1.

collective noun ***el sustantivo colectivo*** defined at 2.3.1.

comment ***el comentario*** or ***el rema*** defined at 42.9.1.

comparative ***la forma comparativa*** the form of an ADJECTIVE or ADVERB used to show that something or someone has more or less of a quality: 'faster', 'less/more hard-working', 'better', 'worse', *más rápido*, *más/menos laborioso*, *mejor*, *peor*, etc. See Chapter 6. See also SUPERLATIVE.

compound noun ***el sustantivo compuesto*** a noun formed by joining two or more words, e.g. 'police dog'/*el perro policía*, 'missile launcher'/*lanzamisiles*, 'lawn-mower'/*el cortacésped*.

compound tense ***el tiempo compuesto*** — TENSES formed by using an AUXILIARY VERB (normally *haber* in Spanish) with the PAST PARTICIPLE of another verb, e.g. *he visto* 'I have seen', *han vuelto* 'they've returned'. See Chapter 18.

conditional ***el condicional*** **or** ***el potencial*** — a form of the VERB used to express conditions, e.g. 'it would break'/*se rompería*, 'I would be delighted'/*me encantaría*, etc.

conditional sentence ***la oración condicional*** — a SENTENCE which expresses a condition, e.g. 'if I had money I'd buy a helicopter'. See Chapter 29.

conjugate ***conjugar*** — the way a verb takes different forms to show AGREEMENT with the SUBJECT, and to indicate TENSE or MOOD. The statement '*hablar* conjugates exactly like *amar*' means that the endings of both verbs are identical: *hablo/amo*, *hablas/amas*, *hablé/amé*, etc.

conjugation ***la conjugación*** — see 16.1 and 16.2.

conjunction ***la conjunción*** — a word or phrase (other than a RELATIVE PRONOUN or RELATIVE ADVERB) used to link words, phrases or CLAUSES within a SENTENCE, e.g. 'and', 'but', 'or', *y*, *o*, *pero*, *que* (as in *dijo que nos llamaría* '(s)he said (s)he'd call us'), etc. See Chapter 37.

consonant ***la consonante*** — as far as the written Spanish is concerned, all the letters of the alphabet except for the VOWELS *a*, *e*, *i*, *o* and *u*. As far as spoken language is concerned, (roughly) a sound made by partially or briefly obstructing the flow of air through the mouth. Typical consonants in Spanish are *b*, *c*, *ch*, *d*, *g*, *l*, *ll*, *m*, *n*, *ñ*, etc.

continuous form ***la forma continua*** — the Spanish verb form made up of *estar* + the gerund: *estoy hablando* 'I'm talking', *estabas durmiendo* 'you were sleeping', etc. See Chapter 19.

count noun ***el sustantivo contable*** — defined at 2.2.1.

dative ***el dativo*** — a term occasionally used in this book to refer to the third-person pronouns when they are used to indicate an INDIRECT OBJECT, i.e. *le* or *les* or 'I gave **her** five dollars'. It has wider meanings in general linguistics.

defective verb ***el verbo defectivo*** — a verb of which certain forms are not used. *Abolir* is – or used to be – an example: see 16.11.2.

definite article ***el artículo definido*** — see ARTICLE.

demonstrative ***el adjetivo demostrativo*** **and** ***el pronombre demostrativo*** — an ADJECTIVE or PRONOUN which points to something specific, e.g. 'this'/*este*, 'that'/*ese*/*aquel*, 'those'/*esos*/*aquellos*. See Chapter 7.

descriptive adjective ***el adjetivo calificativo*** — the opposite of RELATIONAL ADJECTIVE.

determiner ***el determinante*** — a word used with NOUNS and ADJECTIVES to make them definite or specific or, in the case of adjectives, to turn them into nouns. They include the ARTICLES, DEMONSTRATIVES like *este*, *ese* or *aquel*, numerals and POSSESSIVES. See 5.1d and 5.9 for their effect on adjectives.

dieresis ***la diéresis*** — the two dots over the *ü* in words like *lingüista*, *averigüe* which show that the *u* is not silent.

diminutive suffix ***el sufijo diminutivo*** — a SUFFIX added to a word to denote smallness, affection or sometimes contempt, e.g. 'pig**let**', 'kitchen**ette**', *cas**ita**, ahor**ita**, list**illo**.* English makes little use of such suffixes, but they are very common in Spanish. See Chapter 43.

diphthong ***el diptongo*** — the combination of a strong vowel and a semi vowel, in any order (see 42.2.2b for definitions). The bold letters in the following words are diphthongs: *f**ue**ron*, *r**ey***, *c**ue**stión*, *c**uo**ta*, *qu**ie**n*, *c**aus**a*, *Paragu**ay***, *M**oi**sés.* See also SYLLABLE and TRIPHTHONG.

direct object ***el complemento directo*** — a NOUN, NOUN PHRASE or PRONOUN that receives the direct action of the verb**.** In 'Mary gave Bill a present', 'a present' is the direct object since the action is done to it; Bill is the INDIRECT OBJECT since he is the receiver.

direct speech ***el discurso directo*** — the words actually spoken by a person or character: '"**I love Mondays**," María said'/***adoro los lunes*** *—dijo María*. See also REPORTED SPEECH.

discourse marker ***el conector discursivo*** or ***el marcador discursivo*** or ***el operador discursivo*** — words and phrases like 'nevertheless', 'on the contrary', 'incidentally', 'obviously', 'well . . .', that are used to connect or introduce statements. See 37.11.

dynamic ***dinámico*** — a dynamic verb refers to an action done by someone or something: 'he **broke** a window', 'I **wrote** a novel'. Some verbs do not denote actions but 'states', i.e. no one is actually *doing* anything, as in 'the sky **is** overcast', 'Jill **seems** absent-minded', 'the sun **is shining**'. Such verbs are 'non-dynamic'.

ending ***la terminación*** — a SUFFIX which gives grammatical information, e.g. about the NUMBER, TENSE, MOOD, PERSON or GENDER of a word. Typical Spanish endings are *habla**ron**, buen**os**, viv**as***, etc. Typical English endings are 'ship**s**', 'lik**ed**', 'walk**ing**', etc.

exclamation ***la exclamación*** — an expression of surprise, anger, wonder, admiration, etc., e.g. 'what a nerve!'/*¡qué cara!*

existential sentence ***la oración existencial*** — see Chapter 34.

feminine ***femenino*** — one of the two GENDERS into which Spanish NOUNS are divided.

finite verb ***el verbo finito*** — a form of a VERB which gives information about TENSE, PERSON and NUMBER. *Hablan*/'they talk' (present, third-person and plural) and *contesté* 'I answered' (preterite, first-person and singular) are finite verbs. *Hablar*, *hablado*, *hablando* are non-finite forms since they do not indicate tense, person or number.

fulfilled condition (a term not used by the Academy) — used in this book to refer to sentences that look like conditions but actually are not: 'if she slept all day it was because she went clubbing all night', 'if (i.e. 'whenever') it rained I stayed at home'. See 29.7.

future perfect *el futuro compuesto* or *el futuro perfecto*
a TENSE formed with a future form of AUXILIARY VERB 'to have'/*haber* and a PAST PARTICIPLE, used to refer to an action or event which will occur before another in the future: 'I **will have finished** it by then'/*para entonces lo* ***habré terminado***. See 18.6.

future tense *el futuro simple*
in Spanish, the tense forms like *hablaré*, *vendrá*, *irán* used to refer, among other things, to future time. See 17.6.

gender *el género*
all Spanish NOUNS (except for a few undecided ones) are divided into two classes called MASCULINE and FEMININE: see Chapter 1. These labels have nothing to do with sex when the nouns refer to plants, most wild animals or to non-living things. Some Spanish pronouns have neuter gender: see Chapter 8.

generic *genérico*
a generic noun refers to concepts, things or people in general: '**monkeys** are intelligent', 'I don't like **beer**', '**freedom** means many things'. 'Partitive' nouns refer only to a part of the whole: 'she brought **some roses**'/*trajo* ***rosas*** (not roses in general), 'there's **bread** on the table', i.e. 'some' bread.

gerund *el gerundio*
a NON-FINITE Spanish verb form, always ending in *-ndo* and defined at 24.1.

historic present *el presente histórico*
the use, for dramatic effect, of the present tense to refer to the past: 'and then Jane **walks** in and **says** . . .', *la Segunda Guerra Mundial* ***empieza*** *en 1939*. See 17.3.5.

idiom *el modismo*
a group of words whose meaning cannot be deduced from the meaning of the individual words in the group. The meaning of 'he was hung over' cannot be deduced from the words 'to hang' and 'over'. *Echar de menos* 'to miss (someone/something)' must be learned separately: its meaning has no relation to *echar* 'to throw', *de* 'of' and *menos* 'less'.

imperative *el imperativo*
a MOOD of the VERB used to give commands or instructions or to make requests. See Chapter 21.

imperfect tense *el pretérito imperfecto*
an important TENSE form of Spanish verbs that refers to actions or states that are viewed as going on *at the time*, e.g. *hablaba*, *comías*, *eran*, etc. See 17.5 for definition.

impersonal *se se impersonal*
see *SE IMPERSONAL.*

impersonal sentences *las oraciones impersonales*.
see 32.1 and 32.4.

indefinite article *el artículo indefinido*
see ARTICLE.

indefinite pronoun *el pronombre indefinido*
see PRONOUN.

indicative (*el*) *indicativo*
the verb forms used to state facts or beliefs: 'the earth **is** round'/*la tierra* ***es*** *redonda*; 'I think Anne is away'/*creo que Ana* ***está*** *fuera*: see Chapter 17.

indirect object ***el complemento indirecto*** — in Spanish, a NOUN, NOUN PHRASE or PRONOUN that receives or loses something as a result of the meaning of a verb, adjective or participle. In *Miguel* ***le*** *dio mil euros* 'Miguel gave him/her/you 1000 euros' *le* receives the money and is therefore the indirect object. In Spanish, but not in English, indirect objects can lose as well as gain: ***me*** *robaron mil euros* = 'they stole 1,000 euros off/from me', but ***me*** *dieron mil euros* 'they gave 1,000 euros to me'. See Chapters 14 and 15 for details.

indirect question ***la pregunta indirecta, la oración interrogativa indirecta*** — a question reported in INDIRECT SPEECH. 'When did you arrive?'/*¿cuándo llegaste?* is a direct question, 'I wonder when you arrived?'/*me pregunto cuándo llegaste* is an indirect question. So is 'I don't know how to do it'/*no sé cómo hacerlo* (the direct question is: 'how do I do it?'/*¿cómo lo hago?*). Another definition: a sentence which has a SUBORDINATE CLAUSE beginning with an INTERROGATIVE word like *cómo*, *cuál*, *cuándo*, *dónde*, *qué*, *quién*.

indirect speech ***el discurso indirecto*** — see REPORTED SPEECH

infinitive ***el infinitivo*** — a NON-FINITE form of a verb which, in Spanish, always ends in *-ar*, *-er*, *-ir* or *-ír*. See Chapter 22.

interrogative (*el*) ***interrogativo*** — **question** words like 'when?', 'where?', 'who?', 'which?', 'what?', 'how?', *cómo*, *cuál*, *cuándo*, *dónde*, *qué*, *quién*, used to ask questions. In Spanish interrogative or question words are written with an accent.

intransitive verb ***el verbo intransitivo*** — a VERB is **intransitive** if it cannot have a DIRECT 0BJECT: 'I come'/*vengo* is classified as intransitive since one cannot 'come' something or someone.

irregular verb ***el verbo irregular*** — a VERB which is conjugated in a way that does not follow the pattern of the majority of Spanish verbs. See Chapter 16 for lists of these verbs.

masculine ***masculino*** — one of the two GENDERS into which Spanish NOUNS are divided.

mass noun ***el sustantivo no contable*** — defined at 2.2.1.

monosyllable ***el monosílabo*** — a word consisting of only one syllable. 'dog', 'house', 'yes', *sí*, *fui*, *dio* are all monosyllabic words. 'Porpoise', *casa*, *perro*, etc. have more than one syllable and are therefore polysyllabic.

mood ***el modo*** — Spanish and English verbs have three 'moods': the INDICATIVE mood, the IMPERATIVE mood and the SUBJUNCTIVE mood, the latter being rare in modern English but much used in Spanish. English-speakers sometimes confuse this term with the word used in 'I'm in a bad *mood*', but the grammatical term derives from a Latin word meaning 'mode'.

neuter ***neutro*** — in Spanish, the special form of some pronouns and articles used to refer to things that are not nouns and are therefore genderless. See 7.1.

nominalizer (*el*) ***nominalizador*** — See Chapter 40 for definition.

non-dynamic — see DYNAMIC.

non-finite verb form ***las formas no finitas del verbo*** — see FINITE VERB

non-restrictive ***no restrictivo*** — see RESTRICTIVE.

noun ***el sustantivo*** — a type of word which refers to a person, animal, plant, lifeless object, place or abstraction: 'man', 'student', 'dog', 'oak-tree', *libro*, *Nueva York*, *justicia*, *felicidad* are all nouns. In Spanish, nouns have either masculine or feminine GENDER.

noun phrase ***la frase nominal*** — a group of connected words containing a NOUN (or a PRONOUN) and any other words accompanying it, i.e. a DETERMINER and/or an ADJECTIVE: 'bread', 'white bread', 'the shop/store on the corner', etc.

number ***el número*** — the grammatical distinction between SINGULAR and PLURAL.

object pronouns (***los pronombres de complemento directo e indirecto***) — used in this book to refer to the Spanish pronouns *me/te/lo/la/les/nos/os/los/las* and *les*.

open conditions ***las oraciones condicionales reales*** — defined at 29.2.

ordinal number ***los numerales ordinales*** — a form of a numeral used as an ADJECTIVE to indicate the place something occupies in a series: 'my **first** kiss'/*mi* ***primer*** *beso*, 'the **sixth** chapter'/*el* ***sexto*** *capítulo.*

participle ***el participio*** — a NON-FINITE form of the VERB. Spanish has a PAST PARTICIPLE, e.g. *hablado* and an ADJECTIVAL PARTICIPLE, e.g. *saliente*, *perteneciente*. See Chapter 23.

participle clause ***la construcción absoluta*** — a clause in which the FINITE VERB is replaced by a PARTICIPLE: '**having realized the truth**, I left' from 'when I had realized the truth, I left' or ***llegados a Madrid*** *se alojaron en un buen hotel* '**having arrived in Madrid** they stayed in a good hotel'.

partitive ***partitivo*** — see GENERIC.

passive ***la pasiva*** — a verbal construction where the agent of the action is not necessarily mentioned and the SUBJECT is typically a person or thing to which something happens, e.g. '**Claudia** was elected as chairperson'. Spanish has various passive constructions, (1) passive with *ser* – *la casa fue construida* – defined at 32.2; (2) the PASSIVE WITH *ESTAR* – see the next item; (3) passive *se* – *la casa se construyó* – defined at 32.4. A special version of the latter construction is used when the noun or pronoun refers to a human being, e.g. *se identificó a tres personas* 'three persons were identified'. See 32.5.

passive with ***estar la pasiva resultativa*** **or** ***la pasiva de resultado*** — a passive construction formed with ***estar*** and a participle, e.g. *el ladrón estaba detenido* 'the thief was under arrest'. It focuses on the result of an action whereas the passive with *ser* focuses on the action itself. See 32.2.5 for details.

past participle ***el participio pasado*** — a NON-FINITE form of the VERB typically ending in *-ado*, *-ido* or, occasionally, *-to* or *-so*, e.g. *hablado*, *vivido*, *comido*, *vuelto*, *abierto*, *impreso*.

past tense ***el tiempo pretérito*** — in Spanish, any TENSE that refers to the past, e.g. PRETERITE, IMPERFECT, PERFECT, or PLUPERFECT, as opposed to PRESENT or FUTURE tenses. *Pretérito* simply means 'past' in Spanish, and not just 'preterite'.

pejorative suffix ***el sufijo despectivo*** — a suffix like *-ajo*, *-ucho* that expresses distaste or revulsion, as in *un hotelucho* 'a doss-house'/'dingy hotel'. See 43.4. English does not have pejorative suffixes.

perfect tense ***el pretérito perfecto compuesto*** — a COMPOUND TENSE of the verb, e.g. *he dicho* 'I have said', *hemos contestado* 'we have answered'. It is called 'present perfect' in some grammar books since the AUXILIARY verb *haber* is in the present tense.

person ***la persona*** — a grammatical category indicating the identity of the subject of a verb. Spanish and English have three 'persons': the 'first' person: 'I'/'we'/ *yo*/*nosotros*(*as*), the second person, i.e. the person addressed, 'you'/ *tú/vos/usted/vosotros*(*as*)*/ustedes*; and the third person, i.e. the persons or things that we are talking about: 'he'/she'/'it'/'they', *él/ella/ellos/ ellas/ello*.

personal ***a*** — defined at 22.1.

personal pronoun ***el pronombre personal*** — see PRONOUN.

phrase ***la frase*** — any meaningful combination of words that does not contain a FINITE VERB. 'Coffee with milk' is a phrase, whereas 'I like coffee with milk' is a SENTENCE.

pluperfect tense ***el pretérito pluscuamperfecto*** — a COMPOUND TENSE, e.g. *habíamos visto* 'we had seen', defined at 18.3.

plural (*el*) *plural* — a grammatical term indicating more than one person or thing. 'dog' is a SINGULAR noun, 'dogs' is a plural noun. *Blancos* 'white' is a masculine plural form of the adjective *blanco*.

possessive adjective or pronoun ***los adjetivos o pronombres posesivos*** — a word that indicates the identity of the possessor, e.g. 'my'/ 'your'/'his', *mi/tu/su*, 'mine'/'hers'/*mío/suyo*, etc. See Chapter 9.

predicate ***el predicado*** — the part of the sentence which says something about the SUBJECT. In this grammar the word is used only of the predicates of the verb 'to be', e.g. *Miguel es* ***amigo de Pedro*** 'Miguel is **a friend of Pedro**'.

prefix ***el prefijo*** — letters added to the beginning of the root form of a word so as to alter or add meaning, e.g. '**pre**conception', '**re**place', ***des****cubrir* 'to discover', ***re****huir* 'to shun'/'to avoid'

preposition ***la preposición*** — a word or phrase used before a noun or pronoun to relate it grammatically to another word or phrase: 'the dog's sleeping **on** the bed', *fuimos* ***a*** *Caracas*, 'I came back **with** her'/*volví* ***con*** *ella*, etc. See Chapter 38 for details.

present participle — in Spanish studies, a rather inaccurate alternative name for the ADJECTIVAL PARTICIPLE, e.g. *preocupante* 'worrying', *convincente* 'convincing'.

present tense *el tiempo presente de indicativo* — the simple present TENSE, e.g. *hablo*, *comes*, *son*, that indicates – among other things – that an action is occurring *now*. See 14.3.

preterite tense (American spelling 'preterit') ***el pretérito perfecto simple*** — a TENSE of Spanish verbs that indicates actions or events in the past that are viewed as completed at the time, e.g. *habló*, *hice*, *supieron*. See 17.4.

pronominal verb *el verbo pronominal* — any Spanish verb which is conjugated with an object pronoun of the same person as the verb's subject. e.g. *lavarse*, *me voy*, *te dormiste*, *se salió*. Many grammars call these 'reflexive verbs', a term that we reject for the reasons given at 30.1.1.

pronoun *el pronombre* — a word that replaces a NOUN PHRASE already mentioned, or about to be mentioned, in a sentence: 'John came in and **he** said to **me**', *¿conoces a **alguien** que pueda ayudar**me**?* Personal pronouns refer to known people or things: 'he', 'she', 'you', it', etc. Indefinite pronouns refer to unidentified persons or things: 'someone', 'anyone', 'something', *algo*, *alguien*, etc.

reciprocal *recíproco* — one possible meaning of plural PRONOMINAL VERBS, i.e. when the subjects perform an action on or for one another as in *se quieren* (*el uno al otro*) 'they love one another'. See 30.3.

reflexive *reflexivo* — used in this book to refer to one possible *meaning* of a Spanish PRONOMINAL VERB, i.e. when the subject performs an action upon or for himself/herself, as in 'I wash myself'/*me lavo*. See 30.2.

relational adjective *el adjetivo relacional* — a type of Spanish ADJECTIVE that typically replaces a phrase consisting of *de* + a noun, e.g. *problemas **estudiantiles*** for *problemas de los estudiantes* 'student problems', *industria **petrolera*** for *industria del petróleo* 'oil industry'. See 5.11 for details. Adjectives that merely describe qualities (the majority), like *hombre **inteligente***, *pájaro **blanco***, are 'descriptive' adjectives or *adjetivos calificativos*.

relative clause *la cláusula relativa* — a SUBORDINATE CLAUSE that modifies a noun or pronoun used earlier in a sentence, e.g. 'the house **that Jack built**', *el amigo **con el que fui al cine*** 'the friend **I went to the cinema with**'. All Spanish relative clauses must be introduced by a RELATIVE PRONOUN. See Chapter 39.

relative pronoun *el pronombre relativo* — defined at 39.1.

remote conditions *la condición improbable o irreal* — defined at 29.3.

reported speech *el discurso indirecto* — a construction by which what someone said is built into a sentence rather than given in the speaker's original words. 'Bill said "I feel tired"' reports Bill's DIRECT SPEECH; 'Bill said that he felt tired' is an example of indirect or reported speech.

restrictive ***restrictivo*** — a term applied to ADJECTIVES (see 4.11.1) and to RELATIVE CLAUSES (see 39.1.2) that create a subset of something, as in '**Spanish** fruit', 'houses **that have red roofs**'. Non-restrictive adjectives and clauses do not create a subset, as in 'the **holy** Bible', 'the galaxies **that fill the universe**'; see 39.1.2 for details.

se de matización — defined at 30.5.

se impersonal — a name for the Spanish pronoun *se* when it has the same meaning as the French word *on*, German *man*, English 'people'/'one', as in *se entra por aquí* 'one goes in this way', *se come demasiado* 'people eat too much'. It must be distinguished from *SE PASIVO*.

se pasivo — see PASSIVE.

semivowel ***la semivocal*** — in Spanish these are *y* or *i* when they are pronounced like the *y* in *yo*, and *u* when it is pronounced [w], as in *bueno*. The semivowels in the following words are in bold: *v**i**ene*, *Ital**i**a*, *d**i**o*, *v**i**uda*, *ha**y***, *b**ue y***, *Urugua**y***, *t**u**erca*, etc.

sentence ***la oración*** — the longest unit of grammar, ending with a full stop in writing. It must have at least one main CLAUSE, e.g. *Miguel compró un coche*, and the main clause(s) can have one or more dependent SUBORDINATE CLAUSES: *Miguel compró un coche* ***que tiene cuatro puertas***. 'Fantastic party last night!' is not a sentence but a phrase since it has no FINITE VERB. See also PHRASE.

singular ***singular*** — a grammatical term referring to one person or thing. See also PLURAL.

stress ***el acento tónico*** — a feature of Spanish, English and many, but not all, languages whereby one syllable in a word is pronounced more energetically than the rest, as in '**com**fortable', *ver**dad***. The position of the stress can affect meaning in both Spanish and English, compare 'a **re**bel' and 'they re**bel**', or ***ha**blo* and *ha**bló***.

subject ***el sujeto*** — the person or thing that performs the action of a verb, as in '**Mike** slammed the door', '**Jill's** sleeping'. In the case of verbs like 'to be' or 'to seem' that do not denote actions, the subject is the person or thing about which something is predicated or stated, as in '**Robert** is blond', '**bread** can go stale', ***María*** *parece contenta*.

subjunctive mood ***el modo subjuntivo*** — a MOOD of the VERB. It is much used in Spanish, usually, but not always, in SUBORDINATE CLAUSES, but attempts to give a single definition of its various uses invariably generate confusion. See Chapter 20.

subordinate clause ***la cláusula subordinada*** — **a CLAUSE** which does not in itself form a sentence but depends on a MAIN CLAUSE. Thus 'strawberries are delicious' is a sentence and also a main clause, complete in itself. 'When they are fresh' only makes sense when subordinated to a main clause: 'strawberries are delicious **when they are fresh**'. A sentence consisting of a main clause and one or more subordinate clauses is traditionally called a 'complex' sentence, *una oración compuesta* or *una oración compleja*. Spanish subordinate clauses often – but by no means always – require subjunctive verbs. See Chapter 20.

subordinator ***el nexo subordinante*** — a word or phrase that introduces a SUBORDINATE CLAUSE, e.g. *te lo diré* ***cuando*** *llegues* 'I'll tell you **when** you arrive', *Alfredo me dijo* ***que*** *se sentía mejor* 'Alfredo told me **that** he felt better', *no sé* ***dónde*** *están* 'I don't know **where** they are', *los puse ahí* ***para que*** *los vieras/vieses* 'I put them there **so that** you would see them'.

suffix ***el sufijo*** — letter(s) added to the end of the root form of a word so as to alter or add meaning, e.g. 'social**ism**', 'art**ist**', 'deep**en**', *contest****ación*** 'answer', *impermeable* 'waterproof'.

superlative ***el superlativo*** — the form of an adjective or adverb used to show that a noun or pronoun has the most or least of a quality, e.g. 'he is the **tallest**'/*él es* ***el más alto***, 'the **least expensive**'/*el* ***menos caro***.

syllable ***la sílaba*** — 'a unit of pronunciation having one vowel sound, with or without surrounding consonants, and forming a part of a word' (*Oxford Concise Dictionary*). This definition is valid for Spanish provided one remembers that DIPHTHONGS and TRIPHTHONGS are counted as single vowels. One-syllable words: *no*, *sin*, *dio*, *quien*, *riais* (new spelling). Two syllable words: *cama*, *poder*, *caer*, *caimán*, *maguey*, *rieron*, *Francia*, *vieira.* Three-syllable words: *examen*, *público*, *continuo*, *continuáis*, *Uruguay.* Four-syllable words: *Argentina*, *república*, *averiguó*, *ministerio*, *religioso.*

tense ***el tiempo*** **(*verbal*)** — a form of the VERB which indicates the time of an event or state. Tenses can be past, present or future, but there are more than three tense forms in English and Spanish. See Chapter 16.

tilde **(fem.)** — any written accent in Spanish, i.e. the acute accents in *áéíóú*, the sign over an *ñ* or the dieresis (two dots) over a *ü* as in *desagüe.* In everyday speech the word *el acento* is often used for the acute accent over vowels like *á*, *é*, *í*, etc., but *la tilde* is the usual word in grammar books.

topic ***el tema*** — the element in a sentence about which we wish to say something. It usually, but by no means always, coincides with the SUBJECT of the sentence, e.g. '**Peter** won the lottery'. But it could be a DIRECT OBJECT, e.g. '**pork** I'm not eating, so there!', or some other word or phrase, as in '**as for cricket**, it's a game I don't really understand'. See 42.9.1.

transitive verb ***el verbo transitivo*** — a VERB is transitive if it can have a DIRECT OBJECT: 'I **broke** a glass', *Ángel la* ***admiraba*** 'Angel admired her'. See also INTRANSITIVE VERB.

triphthong ***el triptongo*** — a combination of vowels consisting of one strong vowel and two semivowels (see 42.2.2b and c for definitions). The bold letters in the following words are triphthongs: *evac****uái****s*, *construy****ái****s*, *camb****iéi****s*, *b****uey****.* See also SYLLABLE, DIPHTHONG.

unfulfilled conditions ***la (oración) condicional imposible o contrafactual*** — defined at 29.4.

verb ***el verbo*** — a type of word which refers to an action, event, process or state: 'to repair', 'to shine, 'to go', 'to be', *comer*, *brillar*, *estar*, *ser.*

verb phrase ***la frase verbal*** the part of a SENTENCE containing a VERB and – optionally – its DIRECT or INDIRECT OBJECT(s). In 'Peter's girlfriend ate five kebabs', 'Peter's girlfriend', the SUBJECT, is a NOUN PHRASE and 'ate five kebabs' is a verb phrase.

vowel ***la vocal*** difficult to define but easy to identify. In Spanish the vowels are *a*, *e*, *i*, *o* and *u*.

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yo 12.1
yo que tú: = 'if I were you...' 29.10

z: pronunciation of 44.1.3 items C and Z