A Student Grammar of Spanish

*A Student Grammar of Spanish* is a concise introduction to Spanish grammar, designed for English-speaking undergraduates. Assuming no prior knowledge of grammatical terminology, it explains each aspect of Spanish grammar in clear and simple terms, provides a wealth of glosed examples to illustrate them, and helps students to put their learning into practice through a range of fun and engaging exercises.

Clearly organized into thirty units, each covering a different aspect of the grammar, the book functions both as an essential reference guide and as a comprehensive workbook. Individual topics can be looked up via a user-friendly cross-referencing system, and concise definitions are provided in a useful glossary of grammatical terms. The exercises, which include paired and group activities, are suitable for both classroom use and self-study. Each unit is split into two levels, basic and intermediate, making this grammar the perfect accompaniment to any first- or second-year undergraduate course.

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A Student Grammar of Spanish

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Preface

According to the very latest estimates (2004), Spanish is the native tongue of well over 350 million people, 100 million of whom live in Mexico and 24 million in the USA. It is therefore a major world language, the fourth largest in terms of speakers. Its study thus offers all students a meaningful and attractive prospect of establishing contact with a very wide range of Spanish speakers coming from numerous countries. Any student of Spanish will benefit, both personally and culturally, from communication with such a vast array of people bound together by a common language. Spanish as a mother tongue unites countries as far apart as New York or London are from Pekin, but distance does not necessarily entail intractable difference. Surprising as it may seem, it is often as easy for an English-speaking student of Spanish to understand the Spanish of Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Peru or Ecuador as it is for an English or American person to understand the language of some parts of Scotland, for instance, or for a Spanish speaker to understand the language of some regions of Andalucia.

Any learner of Spanish will need, certainly in the early stages of contact with the language, a grammar book which assists her/him through the initial maze. Such a volume needs to appeal both to the beginner and to the student who has acquired some basic knowledge. The present book is designed precisely to cater for these differing needs, while bearing in mind the North American reader and his/her British counterpart. Furthermore, it must aim to include both Iberian Spanish and the Spanish of the Americas. This balancing act is not as delicate as it may first appear. Long experience has taught the present author that there is much more in the field of Spanish grammar that brings Spanish speakers together than separates them, while the differences between the English of the United Kingdom and of the United States need not be exaggerated.

This book on Spanish grammar has therefore a general appeal which deals with most aspects of the grammar in a straightforward and uncomplicated way. It treats the grammatical structures of Spanish as expressed in Spain and Mexico. Mexico is taken as a model for the whole of Spanish America, since to attempt a comprehensive coverage of all Spanish America would serve little purpose, especially since the grammar, as apart from vocabulary, of Spanish differs little from one country to another. Mexican Spanish is one of the standard variants, partly due to the exportation of movies and telenovelas (soap operas), while it is unquestionably the most prevalent variety found in the South West of the United States. M indicates that the word or structure is specifically Mexican while it may be confidently assumed that, where M does not appear, usage is Iberian but will be understood and even used in Mexico, as well as in most of the other Spanish-speaking countries in the Americas. A simple illustration of a Mexican alternative may be seen in...
Preface

some of the headings to exercises where *to fill in blank spaces* is translated as *rellenar los blancos* for Iberian Spanish and *llenar los espacios* for Mexican Spanish.

This volume covers all major grammatical points of Spanish in a user-friendly and direct way, and recognizes that humor is part of the learning process. You’ll learn much more if you study with a smile, while Mexicans lead the way in the field of humor. The present author learnt a lot from Cantinflas, the Mexican comedian.

All the points are presented in an easily accessible way, and are reinforced, at every phase and after each level, by exercises, while suggested solutions to these exercises can be found at the end of the book. Some exercises are short, some much longer, and some involve the student in role play, a well-tried method for developing linguistic skills, and in games such as puzzles. A fun element is central to the concept and genesis of the book.

There are paired or group exercises in both levels of nearly every unit. They encourage you to use and speak Spanish. You’ll be surprised how much progress you make by insisting on speaking the language. It is difficult to suggest the amount of time needed for these particular exercises since the author does not want to be prescriptive. Often, a time of five minutes is suggested for preparing yourself for the exercise but teachers/instructors have their constraints.

All the exercises in level 1 have instructions in English. To reflect the more advanced work in level 2, the instructions are in Spanish.

Naturally enough, the exercises are more demanding and challenging in the second level than in the first. But the key is there to help you out. Of course, use the key wisely. Don’t take a peek at the answers until you have really tried to deal with the exercise in question.

Examples are often presented in the feminine form. The text avoids sexist bias and reaches out to females and males alike. The treatment of each grammatical area follows a very clear pattern. Basic points are covered, logically, at the beginning, and are separated off from the more advanced grammatical features. The book is thus divided into two levels by an image where the climbing of stairs representing letters suggests more progressive work.

It should be emphasized that the present work is a self-help book, and does not require the constant presence of, or reference to, a teacher. Furthermore, constant cross-referencing should help the student to gain a clear and more rounded picture of all the grammatical points.

American English takes precedence over British English. American spelling is preferred to its English counterpart but this should present no problem whatever to the non-American learner. Where there could be lexical misinterpretation, both American and British terms appear side by side.

The book contains a “Glossary of grammatical terms” which will help you understand any semi-technical grammatical expressions you may have difficulty with. Use this glossary regularly to familiarize yourself with the terms used in the text. It is so much easier to come to grips with the grammar of a foreign language if you gain some insight into the way that even the English language functions.

The text also has a comprehensive index designed to direct you to any particular point of grammar or vocabulary you wish to consult.

The book is up-to-date. For instance, you will come across a section on the problems of gender now that females are working in fields once inaccessible to them. Compound nouns, once unusual in Spanish, except for just a few, are springing up like mushrooms, and the text pays serious attention to them.
Preface

The word “grammar” often has a daunting resonance, but it is by making your way through the intricate web of grammatical structures and conquering the foreign way in which Spanish speakers express themselves, that you will not only derive intellectual satisfaction from your achievements but also emotional enjoyment from what is, in the final analysis, the desire to establish a permanent and worthwhile association with a dominant world culture.
I am deeply indebted to Dr. J. Pérez Larracilla, Mexican colleague and friend, for his sure and indigenous knowledge of Mexican Spanish and his permanent willingness to offer me advice and information whenever needed.

The book has also greatly benefited from the myriad comments and suggestions of my colleague Dr. Tim McGovern.

Let us not forget all the Spanish speakers who have patiently and accurately responded over the years to a continual bombardment of questions.

However hard I try, and I have tried numerous times, I cannot produce a perfect text. But help is always at hand in the form of my copy-editor, Leigh Mueller, who has performed her customary and exemplary trick of ironing out all my inconsistencies and improving on the presentation of the work.
Glossary of grammatical terms

ACCENT
Sign written over a letter, often a VOWEL, at least in Spanish, e.g. caféc, corrió (ran). Accent is often confused with STRESS. See STRESS.

ADJECTIVE
A word that describes a NOUN. It agrees with the noun it qualifies, e.g. una casa hermosa, nubes gris, un chico alto (a lovely house, grey clouds, a tall boy).

ADJECTIVE, DEMONSTRATIVE
Este hombre, esa mujer, aquella casa, aquellas calles (this man, that woman, that house, those streets).

ADVERB
A word or group of words that modify a VERB, ADJECTIVE or another ADVERB, e.g. Puedo hacerlo fácilmente (I can do it easily), Este pan es muy bueno (This bread is very good).

AGENT
The person or thing performing the action indicated by the VERB, e.g. El gato atacó al perro (The cat attacked the dog). Here the agent is the cat, as in the following example: El perro fue atacado por el gato (The dog was attacked by the cat).

AGREEMENT
There are three kinds of AGREEMENT in Spanish.
1. AGREEMENT in number. ADJECTIVES, VERBS and ARTICLES agree with the NOUNS and PRONOUNS they relate to, e.g. La chica lista hace sus deberes.
2. Gender AGREEMENT. ADJECTIVES agree with the NOUN they qualify, e.g. un chico alto, una chica guapa.
3. AGREEMENT of TENSE. A correspondence of TENSES is often, but not always, required in Spanish, e.g. Te quería que mi hermano me ayudara (I wanted my brother to help me), Le he dicho que iré (I have told him/her that I will go), Le dije que iría (I told her/him I would go) (see “GUIDANCE ON VERBS”).

ANTECEDENT
A word or PHRASE to which a PRONOUN refers. The word or PHRASE always precedes the PRONOUN, e.g. The boy who lives down the road is a genius. The boy is the ANTECEDENT of who. When the ANTECEDENT is unclear or indeterminate, the following VERB is very often in the SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD.
## Glossary of grammatical terms

**APOGICATION**
Shortening of some ADJECTIVES when they immediately precede a NOUN, e.g. *un buen* (from *bueno* café (good coffee), *un mal* (from *malo* vino (bad wine))

**APPOSITION**
Two words placed side by side, so that the second word modifies the first, e.g. *Madrid, capital de España*. It may be said that *capital* is in APPOSITION to *Madrid*

**ARTICLE, DEFINITE**
Word which, when placed in front of a NOUN, determines it by giving it GENDER and NUMBER, e.g. *el padre, la madre, los padres, las madres*. English equivalent is the easier, all-purpose *the*

**ARTICLE, INDEFINITE**
Determines a NOUN when placed in front of it, but less precise than the DEFINITE ARTICLE, e.g. *un coche, una mesa, unos coches, unas mesas*. The English equivalent is *a* and *some*

**AUGMENTATIVE**
Letters added to the end of a word to indicate an increase in size, or an unpleasant or frightening appearance, e.g. *casona* (large, stately house), *picacho* (large, towering peak), *casucha* (ugly, unpleasant house, hovel)

**CLAUSE**
Words forming part of a sentence, containing a FINITE VERB

**CLAUSE, MAIN**
A CLAUSE that can stand alone as a sentence, e.g. *Bajé las escaleritas* (I went down the stairs)

**CLAUSE, SUBORDINATE**
A CLAUSE in a sentence that depends on a MAIN CLAUSE to make sense, e.g. *Fui al mercado antes de que llegara mi hermano* (I went to the market before my brother arrived). *Fui al mercado* is the MAIN CLAUSE while *antes de que llegara mi hermano* is the SUBORDINATE CLAUSE

**COMPARISON**
Applies to ADJECTIVES and ADVERBS that are modified to convey greater or lesser intensity, e.g. *mejor, peor, menos/más listo* (better, worse, less/more intelligent)

**COMPLEMENT**
Word, PHRASE, or CLAUSE that completes the meaning of a sentence: *a genius* is the complement of *She is a genius. He would be early* is the complement of *I hoped he would be early*

**CONJUGATION**
Model followed by VERB forms. There are three regular CONJUGATIONS in Spanish: *hablar, comer, vivir*. Unfortunately, for us foreigners, there are numerous IRREGULAR VERBS which include RADICAL/STEM CHANGING VERBS. IRREGULAR VERBS can confuse Spanish speakers, especially children, so we are not alone
## Glossary of grammatical terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONJUNCTION</strong></td>
<td>Any word or group of words, but not a relative pronoun, that connects words or phrases, e.g. <em>Tomé el primer plato y el segundo, pero no el postre</em> (I had the first course and the second but not the dessert)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONSONANT</strong></td>
<td>A speech sound or letter other than a vowel, e.g. <em>b, c, d</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DIERESIS</strong></td>
<td>Orthographical sign placed above <em>u</em> &gt; ü in the syllables <em>gui</em> and <em>gue</em>. This produces a pronunciation of two syllables of two distinct vowel sounds where normally you have a diphthong, e.g. <em>cigüeña</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DIMINUTIVE</strong></td>
<td>Letters added to the end of a word to indicate the meaning of &quot;small.&quot; It often conveys an affectionate tone. The Mexicans are fond of diminutives, even more than the Spaniards, e.g. <em>golpecito</em> (tap, small blow), <em>mesilla</em> (small, bed-side table)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diphthong</strong></td>
<td>A vowel sound, occupying a single syllable, and containing up to two vowels, e.g. <em>aire, caigo</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GENDER</strong></td>
<td>What distinguishes nouns as well as pronouns. All nouns and pronouns have a gender, not just male and female human beings and animals, e.g. <em>el chico</em> (the boy), <em>la chica</em> (the girl), <em>el sol</em> (the sun), <em>la luna</em> (the moon), <em>lo/le</em> veo (I see him), <em>la veo</em> (I see her). Agreement must be made between the noun and adjective or past participle, except when used to form the perfect tenses, with <em>haber</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTERJECTION</strong></td>
<td>Words that express an exclamation and denote any strong emotion, e.g. ¡Dios mío!, ¡Hijole! (M) (Jeez!, Wow!, Gee!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LANGUAGE, FIGURATIVE</strong></td>
<td>Language that uses a figure of speech, e.g. <em>Luchó como un león</em> (She fought like a lion), <em>izar la bandera de la libertad</em> (to raise the standard of freedom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOUN</strong></td>
<td>A word used to name a person, thing or concept. Nouns can be concrete <em>hombre</em> [man], <em>coche</em> [car] or abstract <em>alegría</em> [joy], <em>malestar</em> [uneasiness]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NUMBER, CARDINAL</strong></td>
<td>A number which enables us to count <em>Uno, dos, tres</em> . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NUMBER, ORDINAL</strong></td>
<td>A number indicating order in which things appear. <em>Primer, segundo, tercero</em> . . . (First, second, third . . .)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERSONAL “A”</strong></td>
<td>Used before a direct object that is a well-known person or pet animal, e.g. <em>Ví a Juana / a tu perro</em> (I saw Juana / your dog). Causes great awkwardness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary of grammatical terms

to Spanish speakers for they frequently think that it involves an indirect object as in (Le)
Doy el libro a Juan (I give the book to Juan)

PHRASE
A meaningful group of words in a sentence, that does not contain a finite VERB, e.g. en el
jardín (in the yard/garden), por la calle (down the street). Don’t be confused by the
Spanish frase which means both sentence and PHRASE.

PREFIX
SYLLABLE or SYLLABLES attached to the front of a word, e.g. antirracista, anticonstitucional

PREPOSITION
A word that usually comes before a NOUN. It expresses the relation of things to each
other in respect of time and place, e.g. con mi amigo, Voy a México, a las seis, en la mesa,
sobre la silla, bajo el árbol, Vie de Arizona

PRONOUN, DEMONSTRATIVE
PRONOUN that indicates something. Éste es bueno, aquélla es mala (This one is good, that
one is bad). The written ACCENT is not necessary but careful writers prefer it.

PRONOUN, INTERROGATIVE
PRONOUN involving a QUESTION, e.g. ¿Quién ha ganado el premio? (Who has won the
prize?). Other INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS are ¿cuál?, ¿qué? (what?), ¿cuyo? (whose?), ¿cuánto? (how
much?)

PRONOUN, PERSONAL
A word that replaces a NOUN. There are two kinds of PERSONAL PRONOUNS, subject,
and direct and indirect object PRONOUNS, e.g. Yo, tú, él, ella, Ud., nosotros/as, vosotros/as, Uds.
(I, you, he, etc.) are subject PRONOUNS. Me, te, lo/le, la, nos, os, los/les and las (me, you, him, it, us,
you, them) are direct object PRONOUNS while, me, te, le, nos, os, les (to me, you, him, her, it, us, you, them) are indirect object
PRONOUNS. E.g. Yo la veo (I see her/it), yo os/los (M) veo (I see you), Yo le doy el coche (I
give him/her/you the car)

PRONOUN, POSSESSIVE
A PRONOUN indicating possession, e.g. el mío / la mía, el tuyo / la tuya, el suyo / la suya, el nuestro / la nuestra, el
vuestro / la vuestra, el suyo / la suya (mine, yours, etc.). ¿Dónde está la mía? (Where’s mine?)
Glossary of grammatical terms

PRONOUN, RELATIVE
Links a relative CLAUSE to what precedes it, e.g. Vi al chico que vino ayer (I saw the boy who came yesterday). Other relative pronouns are el que, quien, el cual.

QUESTION, DIRECT
A sentence asking a straight QUESTION, e.g. ¿Adónde vas? (Where are you going?)

QUESTION, INDIRECT
QUESTION included in a SUBORDINATE CLAUSE, e.g. Me preguntó adónde iba (She asked me where I was going).

SESEO
Pronunciation of the Spanish z and c before e/i as if they were an s as in soft. The c is pronounced as the th in thick is pronounced, but only by a relatively small number of people, in central and northern Spain. The whole of Spanish America and Andalucía are characterized by the SSEO.

SINGULAR/PLURAL
A SINGULAR NOUN refers to one object while a PLURAL NOUN refers to more than one, e.g. el árbol / los árboles (the tree / the trees).

STEM
Root form of a word, e.g. comprar is the stem of the VERB comprar or the NOUNS compra and comprador.

STRESS/Stressed
The SYLLABLE of a word spoken most loudly or most forcibly. Stress is crucial to meaning in both Spanish and English. Compare hablo (I speak) with habló (he spoke), and both invalids in The invalid had an invalid ticket. Not to be confused with ACCENT.

SUFFIX
SYLLABLE or SYLLABLES attached to the end of a word. These are often AUGMENTATIVES and DIMINUTIVES, e.g. hombrón, jardíncito, mesilla.

SUPERLATIVE
Applies to ADJECTIVES and ADVERBS that are modified to the greatest or least intensity, e.g. Es la mejor/poor estudiante (She is the best/worst student).

SYLLABLE
A combination or set of units of sound. It always contains a VOWEL. Voy contains one SYLLABLE. Iba contains two SYLLABLES and ibamos contains three SYLLABLES.

TILDE
The orthographic sign over the n > ñ that changes the sound. The n of pino has the English sound n as in pine, while the ñ of niño has the English sound ni as in pinion. Most Spanish speakers refer to the ñ as a TILDE, although, strictly speaking, the TILDE is the sign over the n. TILDE also refers to any written ACCENT over a VOWEL, e.g. rompió (I broke), ganó (she/he/you won).

TRIPHTHONG
Three VOWELS forming a single SYLLABLE. Contains two weak VOWELS (i, u) and one strong (a, e, o), e.g. cambiaíš, apreciáiš.

VOWEL
The sounds of a language that are not classified as CONSONANTS, and which, in the case of Spanish, can form a SYLLABLE. Spanish has five VOWELS: a, e, i, o, u.
Glossary of grammatical terms

**Guidance on verbs**

**AGREEMENT**

Correspondence between masculine and feminine **nouns** and part of the **verb**, and between the **plural** of **nouns** and correct form of the **verb**, e.g. *Está sentada* (She is sitting down), *Los chicos juegan en la calle* (The boys are playing in the street).

**AUXILIARY**

An **auxiliary verb** which helps to form a **compound tense** or precedes an **infinite**. In the sentence *He leído el libro*, *He* is the **auxiliary verb**. In the sentence *Voy a ver una película*, *Voy* is the **auxiliary verb**.

**COMPpOUND TENSE**

**Tense** made up of the **verb** *haber* and a **past participle**, e.g. *He/había/habría* [etc.], *andado/hablado/escrito*.

**CONDITIONAL**

Includes a condition and a result, e.g. *Si me das el dinero, compraré el pan* (If you give me the money, I'll buy the bread), *Si me hubieras dado el dinero, (yo) hubiera/habría comprado el pan* (If you had given me the money, I would have bought the bread).

**CONTINUOUS/P progressive**

A **compound verb** made up of the **verb** *estar* (to be) and a **present participle**, e.g. *Estoy leyendo el libro* (I am reading the book), *Estaba preparando la comida* (I was preparing the meal). *Ir* is sometimes used in this way, e.g. *Va amaneciendo* (It's starting to get light), *El camino iba bajando* (The path kept going down).

**FINITE VERB**

The form of a **verb** which is not the **infinite**, e.g. *corre/corriendo* (he runs/running), *leo/leyendo* (I read/reading), *hablamos/hablando* (we speak/speaking).

**FUTURE PERFECT**

**Tense** that refers to a future event that will have happened before a given moment, e.g. *Habremos llegado antes de que salga* (We will have arrived before she leaves).

**FUTURE TENSE**

**Tense** referring to the future, e.g. *Iré (I’ll go)*.

**GERUND**

Spanish **verb** form ending in *-ando*, *-iendo*, *-yendo*, like *-ing* in English, e.g. *andando* (walking), *corriendo* (running), *yendo* (going), *leyendo* (reading).

**HISTORIC PRESENT**

Present **tense** used to invest a description or narration with a greater vividness: *Yo caminaba tranquilamente en el bosque, y ¡fijate! veo a mi gran amigo que me dice que...* (I was wandering through the wood when – imagine it! – I see/saw my great friend who tells/told me that...).

**IMPERATIVE**

Part of the **verb** which conveys a command, e.g. *¡habla! (speak!)*, *¡vete! (go away!)*, *¡come! (eat!)*.

**IMPERFECT**

**Tense** indicating a continuous or repeated action in the past, e.g. *Yo jugaba (al) fútbol* (I used to play / was playing / would play / played football).
Glossary of grammatical terms

**Infinitive**
Part of a verb which does not change, and which you always find in dictionaries, e.g. *vivir* (to live), *andar* (to walk), *ver* (to see).

**Intransitive**
A verb that does not have a direct object or complement. *Ir* (to go) and *venir* (to come) are intransitive verbs. See transitive.

**Irregular Verb**
A verb that does not conform to a pattern. Very troublesome for foreign learners and Spanish-speaking children. *Ir* and *ser* are such verbs. Interestingly and understandably enough, small Spanish children try to “regularize” irregular verbs, as often happens in English. No examples given here!

**Mood, Indicative**
Part of a verb which makes a clear statement, e.g. *Está listo* (He’s ready), *Me gusta el chocolate* (I like chocolate).

**Mood, Subjunctive**
Part of a verb which indicates emotion, pleasure, fear, uncertainty, doubt. It is usually used in a subordinate clause, but not always. Has nearly disappeared in English (e.g., *It is possible he be right*), but very common in all tenses in Spanish and Italian, becoming less common in French where the imperfect subjunctive is very infrequent. E.g. *Es posible que tenga razón* (It’s possible she is/be right), *Era imposible que tuviera razón* (It was impossible that she was right).

**Past Anterior**
Tense made up of the preterit of *haber* and a past participle, e.g. *Cuando hubo llegado, fuimos juntos al...* (When she had arrived, we went... together). This tense is only used in elevated language, novels, etc. The tense in common discourse is the pluperfect.

**Past Participle**
Part of the verb which, in conjunction with the verb *haber*, makes up the perfect tense, e.g. *he andado/hablado* (I have walked/spoken).

**Perfect Tense**
Compound tense made up of *haber* and past participle, e.g. *He visto* (I have seen). Much less used in Spanish America, where it is replaced by the preterit. See “Verbs,” Unit 5.

**Pluperfect**
Tense formed by imperfect of *haber* (había) and the past participle, e.g. *cuando habíamos hablado* (when we had spoken).

**Present Participle**
Name given to the part of the verb ending in -ing in English and in -ando and -iendo in Spanish, e.g. *hablando* (speaking), *comiendo* (eating).

**Preterit**
Simple past tense. Refers to a specific or completed action in the past. Almost entirely replaces the past perfect in Spanish America (see “Verbs,” Unit 5),
Glossary of grammatical terms

**PRONOMINAL VERB**
A verb that is conjugated in all its forms with the pronouns *me, te, se, nos, os*. This means that the subject and the reflexive pronoun are the same person, e.g. *há me veo en el espejo* (I see myself in the mirror). *Me rasuro* (M) / *me afeito* con la máquina (I shave with the electric razor).

**RADICAL/STEM CHANGING VERB**
A verb that is regular in its endings but does not fit an obvious pattern so that Spaniards call them irregular. These verbs are “irregular” because the stressed vowel changes in certain parts of the verb, e.g. *querer – quiero, quieres, quiere, queremos, queréis, quieren* / *contar – cuento, cuentas, cuenta, contamos, contáis, cuentan*. Can cause difficulty, especially in the imperfect subjunctive. It could be legitimately argued that these verbs are not irregular since they do conform to a specific pattern. The English description radical / stem changing is much more helpful than irregular. See “Irregular verbs,” Unit 12.

**REFLEXIVE**
A verb conveying an action done by a person or thing to himself/itself, e.g. *Me lavo* (I wash myself), *El sol se esconde detrás de las nubes* (The sun hides behind the clouds). The English does not have a reflexive form in the second case but it is necessary in Spanish. Otherwise, you would be wondering what the sun was hiding. There are many verbs that behave both non-reflexively and reflexively in Spanish.

**REGULAR VERB**
A verb that conforms to a pattern. Very reassuring for foreign learners, and Spanish-speaking children. *Hablar*, *comer* and *vivir* are regular verbs.

**TENSE**
Part of the verb which indicates the moment when an action or thought takes place, e.g. *nado* is the present tense of the verb *nadar*. *Nadaba* is the imperfect tense of the verb *nadar*.

**TRANSITIVE**
A verb that takes a direct object, e.g. *Veó la puerta* (I see the door). See intransitive.

**VOICE, ACTIVE/PASSIVE**
The active voice relates to the subject of the sentence performing the action. The sentence *The boy broke the window* is in the active voice, whereas *The window was broken by the boy* is in the passive voice. A verb in the active voice can be transitive or intransitive but a verb in the passive voice can only be transitive.
Note on the text

Most translations of either whole sentences, phrases or individual words are given when it is felt that they are necessary for an accurate understanding of the grammar under consideration. However, in quite a few cases, for example, inteligencia, a translation is not given, whereas celo (zeal) would be.

Abbreviations

JPR  Jorge Pérez Larracilla
M  Mexican (Spanish)
Short bibliography

If you wish to progress beyond the confines of this basic volume, you will find the following useful.

Grammars

Alarcos Llorach, Emilio, *Gramática de la lengua española*, Real Academia Española, Madrid: Espasa, 2003 (Very comprehensive but for Spanish speakers, and not presented in tabular form so finding what you want can be time consuming.)


Butt and Benjamin, *A New Reference Grammar of Modern Spanish*, London: Arnold, 2001 (Very comprehensive and for the most advanced students among you.)


Maqueo, Ana María, *Español para extranjeros* (3 volumes), México: Limusa, Noriega Editores, 2002 (Excellent work but very diffuse, presented from a Mexican point of view, and in this sense very useful, notably for North American speakers of English.)

Verb forms


Note. The present book does not include all the verb tables, for reasons of space. It is recommended that you acquire one of these two above.

Usage

Batchelor, R. and Pountain, C., *Using Spanish*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; 2nd edition, 2005 (This book has a concise section on Spanish grammar but also includes numerous chapters on vocabulary and the way the language is used. This includes register, or levels of language.)

Dictionaries

*The Oxford Spanish Dictionary*, Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press, 2000 (Excellent coverage of Spanish American, but you need to be a little wary since Spanish American is so diffuse.)
Short bibliography

*Spanish English English Spanish Dictionary*, Glasgow: Harper Collins, 2001 (Every bit as good as the dictionary above.)

*Simon and Schuster Spanish–English English–Spanish Dictionary*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998 (Again, as good as the two above.)

*Larousse Gran Diccionario, Español–Francés Français–Espagnol*, Barcelona: Larousse, 2002 (Very good dictionary but not so comprehensive as the three above. However, it is extremely helpful for those of you who are aspiring to two languages or more.)

Of all the monolingual dictionaries, the author has found the following particularly useful:


This limited bibliographical section would not be complete without reference to a truly splendid work by Manuel Seco, *Diccionario de DUDAS y dificultades de la lengua española* (10th edition), Madrid: Espasa, 2002 (1st edition, 1961). This volume carries you well beyond dictionary information, and has served the present author for almost forty years, who refers to it frequently, even and often to assist Spanish speakers in clarifying uncertainties in their own language. Furthermore, it is not an indigestible book, and is therefore accessible to many of you who will have worked through this current volume.