

A New
Reference
Grammar
of Modern
Spanish

J O H N B U T T &
C A R M E N B E N J A M I N

THIRD EDITION

McGraw-Hill

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el/la pediatra paediatrician/(US pediatrician)
el periodo or *período* period
el/la políglota polyglot
el/la psiquiatra psychiatrist
policiaco police (adjective; see *demoniaco* above)
la quiromancia palmistry/hand-reading (see note vi)
el rádar radar

el reptil reptile
el reuma rheumatism (everyday usage prefers *el reuma*)
el sánscrito Sanskrit
el termostato thermostat
la tortícolis stiff neck
la utopía utopia
el zodiaco zodiac (see *demoniaco* above)

Some 'mispronunciations' are usual in speech, e.g. *el soviet* 'Soviet', *el oceano* 'ocean' (written and correctly pronounced *el océano*).

Notes

- (i) Written and pronounced *chofer* (i.e. [chofér]) in most countries of Latin America, including Mexico.
- (ii) *El dínamo* in some Latin-American countries, including Argentina and Cuba.
- (iii) Similarly *componte* 'compose yourself', *detente* 'stop'.
- (iv) Stressed *el frijol* in Latin America.
- (v) *El fútbol* is heard in some Latin-American countries.
- (vi) Likewise all words ending in *-mancia* that have the meaning 'divination'.

39.2.5 Accent on interrogative forms

In the case of some words, the interrogative form carries an accent. This indicates a fact of pronunciation: the interrogative form is stressed, as can be seen by contrasting the *ques* in *dice que qué pasa* 'he's asking what's happening' or the *cuandos* in *cuando llega* 'when he arrives ...' and *¿cuándo llega?* 'when is he arriving?' These words are:

<i>cómo</i> how	<i>dónde</i> where
<i>cuál</i> which	<i>qué</i> what/which (also <i>por qué</i> 'why')
<i>cuándo</i> when	<i>quién</i> who
<i>cuánto</i> how much	

See Chapter 24 for further details.

39.2.6 Accent used to distinguish homonyms

In the case of some two dozen common words, the written accent merely eliminates ambiguities:

	without accent	with accent
<i>de/dé</i>	of	
<i>el/él</i>	the (definite Article)	present subjunctive of <i>dar</i>
<i>éste/este</i>	see 6.3	he/it
<i>ése/ese</i>	see 6.3	
<i>aquél/aquel</i>	see 6.3	
<i>mas/más</i>	but (rare)	more
<i>mi/mí</i>	my	me (after prepositions)
<i>se/sé</i>	reflexive pronoun	(i) I know, (ii) <i>tú</i> imperative of <i>ser</i>

<i>si/sí</i>	if	(i) yes, (ii) prepositional form of <i>se</i>
<i>sólo/solo</i> (see 9.15)	alone	only (<i>solamente</i>)
<i>te/té</i>	object form of <i>tú</i>	tea
<i>tu/tú</i>	your	you

Notes

- (i) *Dé* loses its accent if a pronoun is attached and the stress is regular: *denos*, 'give us', *deme* 'give me', etc. Spellings like *déme* are often seen, but the accent is unnecessary.
- (ii) The Academy requires that *o* ('or') should take an accent when it appears between two numerals so as to avoid confusion with zero: *9 ó 5 '9* or *5'*. However, the *Libro de estilo* of *El País* requires its journalists to ignore this rule and write *9 o 5*.
- (iii) The following words do **not** have a written accent: *da* 'gives', *di* 'I gave', *fe* 'faith', *ti* prepositional form of *tú*, *vi* 'I saw', *ve* 'sees', *vio* '(s)he saw', *fui* 'I was', *fue* '(s)he was', *dio* '(s)he gave'.
- (iv) *Aun* 'even' [áwn] and *aún* 'still/yet' [a-ún] are in fact pronounced differently in good Spanish.

39.3 Upper- and lower-case letters

39.3.1 Upper-case letters

These are used much less than in English. They are used:

- (a) At the beginning of sentences, as in English.
- (b) With proper nouns, but not with the adjectives derived from them: *Madrid*, *la vida madrileña* 'Madrid life'; *Colombia*, *la cocina colombiana* 'Colombian cooking'; *Shakespeare*, *el lenguaje shakespeariano* 'Shakespearean (or Shakespeare's) language'.

Adjectives that are part of an official name are capitalized, e.g. *Nueva Zeland(i)a* 'New Zealand', *el Reino Unido* 'the United Kingdom', *Los Estados Unidos* 'the United States', *El Partido Conservador* 'The Conservative Party', *Las Naciones Unidas* 'The United Nations', etc.

When a proper name includes the definite article, the latter is written with a capital letter *El Cairo* 'Cairo', *La Haya*. In the case of countries that appear with the definite article, the article is not part of the name so a lower-case letter is used: *la India* 'India', *la Argentina*. See 3.2.17 for discussion of this use of the article.

39.3.2 Lower-case letters

Lower-case letters are used for:

- (a) Months, seasons and days of the week: *julio* 'July', *agosto* 'August', *verano* 'summer', *invierno* 'winter', *jueves* 'Thursday', *viernes* 'Friday', *martes* 'Tuesday', etc.
- (b) Names of religions and their followers: *el cristianismo* 'Christianity', *el catolicismo* 'Catholicism', *el protestantismo* 'Protestantism', *el islam* 'Islam', *un testigo de Jehová* 'a Jehovah's witness', *los musulmanes* 'the Muslims', etc.
- (c) Official titles, e.g. *el presidente de la República*, 'the President of the Republic', *la reina de Gran Bretaña* 'the Queen of Great Britain', *el papa Juan XXIII* 'Pope John XXIII', *los reyes de España* 'the King and Queen of Spain', *el señor García* 'Sr. 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*