


ENGLISH GRAMMAR FOR STUDENTS OF SPANISH

EMILY SPINELLI



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ENGLISH GRAMMAR FOR STUDENTS OF SPANISH

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UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN—DEARBORN

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English Grammar for Students of French
English Grammar for Students of Spanish
English Grammar for Students of German
English Grammar for Students of Latin
English Grammar for Students of Italian
English Grammar for Students of Russian

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<< Preface >>

English Grammar for Students of Spanish is a simple, practical, self-study manual written to aid high school and college students who are beginning the study of Spanish. It is patterned after the popular *English Grammar for Students of French* by Jacqueline Morton. It does not in any way replace the Spanish textbook, but is designed to supplement and enhance it. Both instructors and students will welcome the convenience and usefulness of this manual.

Students quickly discover that their Spanish textbook uses a variety of grammatical terms such as *verb conjugation*, *direct object pronoun*, *past participle*, or *present subjunctive*. Often students are unsure of the meanings and uses of such terminology and frequently they encounter terms which they have never heard before. This manual takes all the common grammatical terms that are necessary for learning to speak and write Spanish and (a) explains them clearly in English, (b) gives many English examples, and (c) shows the student step by step how to apply the concepts to Spanish. This is basic knowledge, explained simply, clearly, and in sufficient detail for maximum effectiveness. Although students can speak and write their native English without knowing how to identify parts of speech or the function of words, they must know these things in order to speak and write Spanish.

English Grammar for Students of Spanish assumes no knowledge of English grammar. It defines grammatical terms and concepts in a way particularly suited to students learning Spanish. Since the content and organization of the manual are based on a consensus of the material presented in beginning Spanish textbooks, it should help students (and their instructors) get the most out of the textbook they are using. It is designed to supplement any beginning text. In order to simplify the presentation, exceptions to Spanish grammatical rules as well as those points which have no English equivalents have been purposely omitted. Certain key Spanish and English structures have been singled out

for a point-by-point comparison. For easy reference, there is a detailed word index.

Instructors may wish to make use in class of the many examples and contrastive analyses presented in the manual. Instructors whose students use the manual will not only save time preparing lessons, but will also save valuable class time which can be devoted to language practice.

Most Spanish instructors have long recognized the need for a handbook such as this. The simplicity, clarity, and thoroughness of the author's presentation make this manual eminently useful.

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January 1980

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< < Introduction >>

In order to learn a foreign language, in this case Spanish, you must look at every word in three ways: you must be aware of each word's meaning, class and use.

1. **Meaning** of the word. Each English word must be connected with a Spanish word which has an equivalent meaning.

The English word *book* has the same meaning as the Spanish word *libro*.

Words with equivalent meanings must be learned by memorizing vocabulary items.

Sometimes two words are the same or very similar in both English and Spanish. These words are called **cognates** and are, of course, easy to learn.

<u>Spanish</u>	<u>English</u>
inteligente	intelligent
problema	problem
continuar	to continue

Occasionally knowing one Spanish word will help you learn another.

Knowing that *niño* is *boy* should help you learn that *niña* is *girl*; or knowing that *hermano* is *brother* should help you remember that *hermana* is *sister*.

But generally there is little similarity between words and knowing one Spanish word will not help you learn another. Therefore, you must learn each vocabulary item separately.

Knowing that *man* is *hombre* will not help you learn that *woman* is *mujer*.

In addition, sometimes words in combination will take on a special meaning.

The Spanish word **hacer** means *to make*; **cola** means *tail*. However, **hacer cola** means *to line up*.

Such an expression whose meaning as a whole is different from the combination of individual words is called an **idiom**. You will need to pay special attention to idioms in order to recognize them and use them correctly.

2. **Class** of a word. English and Spanish words are grouped according to class, i.e., **part of speech**. There are eight different parts of speech:

noun	article
verb	adverb
pronoun	preposition
adjective	conjunction

Each part of speech has its own rules for spelling, pronunciation and use. You must learn to identify the part of speech to which a word belongs in order to choose the correct Spanish equivalent and know what rules for spelling apply.

Look at the word **that** in the following sentences:

- a. *That* girl is my sister.
- b. There is the car *that* he bought.
- c. We didn't talk about *that*.

The English word is the same in all three sentences, but in Spanish three different words will be used because each **that** belongs to a different part of speech.¹

3. **Use** of a word. In addition to its class as a part of speech each word has a special **function** or use within a sentence. A noun, for example, can be used as a subject, direct object, indirect

¹ a. Demonstrative adjective — see p. 89.

b. Relative pronoun — see p. 135.

c. Demonstrative pronoun — see p. 125.

object, or object of a preposition. Determining the function of the word will help you choose the correct Spanish equivalent and know what rules apply.

Look at the word *him* in the following sentences:

- a. They don't see *him*.
- b. I wrote *him* a letter.
- c. Are you going with *him*?

In English the word is the same but the Spanish equivalent will be different in each sentence because the pronoun *him* has three different uses.¹

NOTE: As a student of Spanish you must learn to recognize both parts of speech and the use of words within a sentence. This is essential because in Spanish words have a great deal of influence upon each other.

Compare the following sentence in English and Spanish.

The small red shoes are on the heavy round table.

Los pequeños zapatos rojos están sobre la pesada mesa redonda.

In English: The only word that affects another word in the sentence is *shoes*, which affects *are*. If the word were *shoe*, *are* would be *is*.

In Spanish: The word for *shoes* (*zapatos*) not only affects *are* (*están*) but also the spelling and pronunciation of the equivalent words for *the*, *small*, and *red*.

The word for *table* (*mesa*) affects the spelling and pronunciation of the equivalent words for *the*, *heavy*, and *round*.

The only word which is not affected by the words surrounding it is *sobre*, meaning *on*.

¹ a. Direct object – see p. 103.
 b. Indirect object – see p. 103.
 c. Object of a preposition – see p. 107.

Since parts of speech and function are usually determined in the same way in English and Spanish, this handbook will show you how to identify them in English. You will then learn to compare English and Spanish constructions. This will give you a better understanding of the grammar explanations in your Spanish textbook.

< < What is a Noun? > >

A **noun** is a word that can be the name of:

- a person teacher, husband, girl, Mr. Smith, Tom, Karen
- a place state, continent, Madrid, Spain, Mt. Everest, Niagara Falls
- a thing or animal map, boat, sea, fish, dog, cow
- an idea love, hate, greed, democracy

Nouns that always begin with a capital letter, such as the names of people and places (John Smith, Spain), are called **proper nouns**. Nouns that do not begin with a capital letter (dog, love, girl) are called **common nouns**.

To help you learn to recognize nouns, here is a paragraph where the nouns are in italics:

The *countries* which make up the Hispanic-speaking *world* export *products* which we use every *day*. *Spain* produces many of the *shoes*, *purses*, *gloves* and other leather¹ *articles* sold in the *United States*. *Spain* also sells us much *wine* and *sherry*. The *islands* of the *Caribbean* and the *nations* of *Central America* supply us with tropical *fruits* such as *bananas* and *papayas*; *sugar* is another important *export* of these *regions*. *Coffee* and *chocolate* are grown in several *countries* of *Latin America*. The petroleum¹ *products* of *Mexico* and *Venezuela* are a major *source* of *income* for their national *economies*.

¹ These are examples of a noun used as an adjective, that is, to describe another noun. See p. 80.

< < What is Meant by Gender? > >

When a word can be classified as to whether it is **masculine**, **feminine**, or **neuter**, it is said to have a **gender**.

Gender plays a very small role in English; however, since it is at the very heart of the Spanish language, let us see what evidence of gender we have in English.

In English: When we use a noun we often do not realize that it has a gender. But when we replace the noun with *he*, *she*, or *it*, we choose only one of the three without hesitation because we automatically give a gender to the noun we are replacing. The gender corresponds to the sex of the person we are replacing.

The *boy* came home; *he* was tired and I was glad to see *him*.

A noun (*boy*) is of the **masculine gender** if *he* or *him* is used to substitute for it.

My *aunt* came for a visit; *she* is nice and I like *her*.

A noun (*aunt*) is of the **feminine gender** if *she* or *her* is used to substitute for it.

There is a *tree* in front of the house. *It* is a maple.

A noun (*tree*) is of the **neuter gender** if *it* is substituted for it.¹

In Spanish: All nouns, common nouns and proper nouns, are either masculine or feminine. There is no such thing as a neuter noun. This means that all objects, animals, and abstract ideas have a gender, as have the names of countries.

¹ There are a few well-known exceptions, such as *ship*, which is referred to as *she*. It is custom, not logic, which decides.

The S/S United States sailed for Europe. She is a beautiful ship.

Unlike English, where the few examples of gender are based on the sex of the noun, gender in Spanish cannot be explained or figured out. It is a question of the Spanish language itself.

Examples of English nouns
whose equivalents are
masculine in Spanish:

money
book
country
Peru
heaven
Wednesday
sorrow
problem

Examples of English nouns
whose equivalents are
feminine in Spanish:

coin
library
nation
Argentina
war
peace
health
philosophy

You will have to memorize each noun with its gender. This gender is important not only for the noun itself, but for the spelling and pronunciation of the words it influences.

Gender can sometimes be determined by looking at the ending of a noun. Below are some noun endings which often correspond to the masculine gender and others which correspond to the feminine gender. Since you will encounter many nouns with these endings in your Spanish course, you should familiarize yourself with them.¹

Feminine Endings

-a	la casa, la biblioteca	<i>house, library</i>
-d	la edad, la ciudad	<i>age, city</i>
-z	la nariz	<i>nose</i>
-ción	la educación, la nación	<i>education, nation</i>
-umbre	la costumbre	<i>custom</i>
-ie	la especie	<i>species</i>

¹ This table of endings has been adapted from John J. Bergen. "A Simplified Approach for Teaching the Gender of Spanish Nouns." *Hispania*, LXI (December, 1978), 875.

Masculine Endings

Any ending except those given above.

In particular:

-l	el papel	<i>paper</i>
-o	el libro	<i>book</i>
-n	el jardín	<i>garden</i>
-e	el parque	<i>park</i>
-r	el dolor	<i>pain</i>
-s	el interés	<i>interest</i>

To help you remember these endings note that for the masculine endings the letters spell “loners.”

There are of course many exceptions to the above rules: **la mano** (*the hand*) is one common exception. Your textbook and instructor will point out the exceptions which you will have to learn individually.

< < What is Meant by Number? > >

When a word refers to one person or thing, it is said to be **singular**; when it refers to more than one, it is called **plural**.

Some nouns, called **collective nouns**, refer to a group of persons or things, but they are considered singular.

A football *team* has eleven players.

The *family* is well.

The *crowd* was under control.

In English: We indicate the plural of nouns in several ways:

- by adding an **-s** or **-es** to a singular noun

book → books

kiss → kisses

- sometimes by making a spelling change

man → *men*
leaf → *leaves*

A plural noun is usually spelled differently and sounds different from the singular.

In Spanish: A word in the plural is spelled and pronounced differently from its singular form. Nouns or adjectives which end

- in a vowel add -s to form a plural:

casa → *casas* *house* → *houses*
libro → *libros* *book* → *books*

- in a consonant add -es to form a plural:

papel → *papeles* *paper* → *papers*
dolor → *dolores* *pain* → *pains*

A few nouns will have internal spelling changes when they become plural. One such common change is -z to -c: *lápiz* → *lápices* (*pencil* → *pencils*). Your textbook will point out other exceptions to the two basic rules listed above.

NOTE: Nouns do not change gender when they become plural.

< < What are Indefinite and Definite Articles? > >

The **article** is a word which is placed before a noun to show if the noun refers to a particular person, thing, animal or object or if the noun refers to an unspecified person, thing, animal or object.

In English: A. Indefinite Articles

A or *an* is used before a noun when we do not speak of a particular person, thing, animal or object. They are called indefinite articles.

I saw *a* boy in the street.
not a particular boy

I ate *an* apple.
not a particular apple

The indefinite articles *a*, *an* are used with a singular noun. If the noun becomes plural, the indefinite article is omitted or replaced by the word *some*.

I saw boys in the street.
I saw *some* boys in the street.

I ate apples.
I ate *some* apples.

B. Definite Articles

The is used before a noun when we are speaking of a particular person, thing, animal or object. It is called the definite article.

I saw *the* boy you spoke to me about.
a particular boy

I ate *the* apple you gave me.
a particular apple

The definite article remains *the* when the noun becomes plural.

I saw *the boys* you spoke to me about.

I ate *the apples* you gave me.