

A New
Reference
Grammar
of Modern
Spanish

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THIRD EDITION

29.2 Uses of ser

29.2.1 In equational sentences of the sort A = B

Ser is used to link elements in statements of the type 'A = B', where A and B are nouns or pronouns:

<i>París es la capital de Francia</i> <i>Soy hombre que odia las medias tintas,</i> <i>el agua turbia, el café flojo</i> (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru)	Paris is the French capital I'm a man who hates things that are not clearly defined, cloudy water, weak coffee
<i>Es médico/abogado/bibliotecario</i> <i>Es un estafador/Esto es una estafa</i> <i>Miguel es el jefe</i> <i>Somos budistas</i> <i>Es mi suegra</i> <i>Es la mujer/Son las doce</i> <i>Dos y dos son cuatro</i> <i>Ha sido un año/perano frío</i> <i>Esto es lo que me fastidia</i> <i>Esto es decir las cosas como son</i> <i>Es un tipo simpático</i> <i>La confrontación de culturas en el siglo XXI puede ser sangrienta, violenta</i> <i>Umberto Eco</i> (El Mundo, Spain)	He's a doctor/lawyer/librarian He's a swindler/This is a swindle Miguel's the boss We're Buddhists She's my mother-in-law It's one o'clock/twelve o'clock Two and two are four It's been a cold year/summer This is what I find annoying This is calling a spade a spade He's a likeable fellow Umberto Eco predicts that clashes between cultures in the 21st century may be bloody

Note

Exceptions to this rule in colloquial speech are weather expressions like *está un día magnífico* 'it's a lovely day' (or *es un día ... /hace un día*), and *estar pez*, e.g. *estoy pez en historia* 'I'm a complete dunce in history' (Spain only?). However, use of *estar* followed by a noun phrase in these weather expressions is not accepted by all speakers: many say only *hace un día magnífico* or *es un día magnífico*, etc. On the other hand, all Spanish informants questioned accepted *está un día que da gusto salir a la calle* 'it's one of those days when you like going out into the streets'. With an adjective *estar* is used in weather expressions: *está lluvioso* 'it's rainy'.

29.2.2 Ser with adjectives

Ser is used with adjectives or adjectival phrases referring to identity or nature, i.e. physical, moral and mental characteristics as opposed to conditions or states:

<i>¿Quién eres?</i> — <i>Soy Carlos</i> <i>¿Cómo eres?</i> — <i>Soy, alto, moreno y delgado</i> <i>Las mariposas son diferentes de las polillas</i> <i>El marxismo es materialista</i> <i>El cobre es ideal para los cables</i> <i>Esa chaqueta es bien bonita</i> <i>Comer demasiado es malo</i> <i>Así soy de testarudo</i> (C. Cabrera Infante, Cuba, dialogue)	'Who are you?' 'I'm Carlos' 'What are you like?' 'I'm tall, dark and slim' Butterflies are different from moths Marxism is materialist Copper is ideal for cables That jacket is very nice Eating too much is not good That's how stubborn I am
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Note

Hacer is used with many adjectives in statements about the weather: *hace frío/calor* 'it's cold/hot', etc.

29.1 General

For the conjugation of *ser* see 13.3.45, and of *estar* see 13.3.21.

Ser and *estar* both translate the English 'to be', but the difference between the two Spanish words is fundamental and sometimes subtle.

Basically *ser* denotes being as opposed to non-being (one says *ser o no ser* 'to be or not to be') or nature or identity, while *estar* denotes condition, state or place: *soy español, pero estoy en Londres* 'I'm Spanish, but I'm in London'; *es callado* 'he's the quiet type', *está callado* 'he's keeping silent (at the moment)'; *puede que sea así* 'perhaps he/she/it is like that', *puede que esté así* 'perhaps that's the condition/situation he/she/it's in'.

It is misleading to imagine that *estar* always refers to temporary states while *ser* indicates permanence. This is usually true, but it is contradicted by sentences like *está muerto* 'he's dead' or by the fact that one can say either *soy calvo* or *estoy calvo* 'I'm bald'. Nor is a characteristic expressed by *ser* necessarily permanent. A brunette can change the colour of her hair and then say *antes era morena pero ahora soy rubia* 'I was a brunette before, but now I'm a blonde', the point being that each colour is nevertheless considered, at the time, to be a characteristic feature of the woman, not a passing state.

Ser is also often used with a few adjectives that indicate what can be thought of as states, e.g. *feliz* 'happy', *desgraciado* 'unhappy', *pobre* 'poor', *rico* 'rich', *consciente* 'conscious'; but these are probably best treated as exceptions: compare *está deprimido* 'he's depressed', *está contento* 'he's happy' / 'content', *está animado* 'he's full of life' (*estar* obligatory).

Some adjectives, e.g. *gordo* 'fat', *divorciado* 'divorced', *casado* 'married', may be used with either *ser* or *estar* with hardly any significant change of meaning.

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 libro?* 'where's the book?'

Ser is used to form the passive: *fue criticado* 'he was criticized'; see Chapter 28. *Estar* is used to form the continuous aspect of verbs: *está hablando* 'he's talking'; see Chapter 15.

29.2.3 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:

<i>Ahora que el precio del petróleo ha bajado, este país es pobre</i> The accused said he was innocent There are many people who don't feel guilty even though they are I'm conscious of my limitations People like that are not usually happy in life, Señora He was seldom so happy as during the hours before his interview with Bordenave I only want her to be happy I'm so unhappy, she told me She told me I'm poor but honest, I only dance to earn my living (Argentinian tango)	<i>El acusado dijo que era inocente</i> Hay muchos que no se sienten culpables aunque lo sean Soy consciente de mis limitaciones La gente así no suele ser feliz en la vida, señora (M. Vargas Llosa, Peru) Pocas veces fue tan feliz como en las horas que precedieron a la entrevista con Bordenave (E. Sábato, Argentina) Yo sólo quiero que sea feliz (A. Mastretta, dialogue, Mexico) —Soy tan desgraciado —me dijo (G. Cabrera Infante, Cuba) Ella me dijo soy pobre, pero honrada, tan sólo bailo para ganarme el pan
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Notes

(i) *Estar rico/pobre/feliz* is sometimes heard in Spain when describing a transitory state, although many Spaniards reject *estar* with these adjectives. Latin Americans frequently use *estar* with *feliz*: *estoy más pobre que una rata* 'I'm as poor as a church mouse' (lit. 'poorer than a rat'), *ahora estoy feliz y contento* 'now I'm happy and satisfied' (*contento* also means 'happy'), *estaban tan felices que me dieron envidia* (A. Mastretta, Mexico) 'they were so happy that they filled me with envy', *acaban de ganar las elecciones y están felices* (A. Bryce Echenique, dialogue, Peru) 'they've just won the elections and they're happy'.

Estar rico generally means 'to be tasty'/'to taste nice' in Spain (see (29.4.4)), but not necessarily in Latin America: *Andrés acompañó al padre José que estaba riquísimo y lo oyó jurar por la Virgen de Covadonga que no tenía un centavo* (A. Mastretta, Mexico) 'Andrés accompanied Father José, who was extremely rich, and he heard him swear by the Virgin of Covadonga that he didn't have a cent.' (ii) Peninsular usage normally differentiates *ser consciente* (de) 'to be aware/conscious of' and *estar consciente* 'to be conscious' (i.e. not asleep or knocked-out). Latin-American language seems to have retained the older usage: *estamos conscientes de que el debate y la discusión en la libertad son demandas de los jóvenes del país* (Unomásuno, Mexico) 'we're aware that debate and argument in (an atmosphere of) freedom are demands of the young people of the country'. Ballester estaba consciente de que la antipatía que le profesaba ... podía trocarse en franca enemistad (S. Galindo, Mexico) 'Ballester was aware that the dislike she felt towards him ... could turn into open hostility'.

29.2.4 Ser de

Ser can be followed by *de* + noun or by *de* + *un* + adjective to denote identity, nature, origin or the material something is made of:

<i>—¿De dónde eres?— De Londres</i> The situation was extremely funny It's day/night What's the table made of? 'Wood' I'm made of flesh and blood like you	<i>La situación era de risa</i> <i>Es de día/noche</i> <i>—¿De qué es la mesa?— Es de madera</i> <i>Soy de carne y hueso como tú</i>
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<i>Oye, que es de verdad</i> Es de un pesado ... Tú eres de prontos impetuosos (C. Martín Gaité, Spain)	Listen, it's true (S)he's such a bore ... You're given to hasty decisions
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29.2.5 Ser and estar in impersonal statements

As stated at 29.2.1, *ser* is used before nouns and noun phrases:

<i>Es verdad/mentira/una tontería/luna</i> <i>penal/luna lata</i>	It's true/a lie/nonsense/a pity/a bore, etc.
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Impersonal phrases based on adverbs take *estar*:

<i>Está fatal/bien/mal/estupendamente ...</i>	It's dreadful/fine/bad/great ...
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With adjectives, *ser* is the usual verb, but there are apparent exceptions:

<i>Es triste/trágico/increíble que haya</i> <i>muerto tan joven</i> <i>es evidente/obvio que ...</i> <i>es necesario/imposible/probable/dudoso, etc.</i> <i>está visto que ...</i> <i>claro está ...</i>	It's sad/tragic/incredible that (s)he died so young it's clear that ... it's necessary/impossible/probable/doubtful ... it's evident that ... clearly ... /of course ...
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Note

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* (M. Benedetti, Uruguay dialogue) 'it's obvious that when that sort of thing ends ... one must be left with a feeling of dignity'.

29.2.6 Ser to denote possession

<i>Todo esto es mío, el día de mañana será</i> <i>truyo</i> <i>El piso es de mi yerno</i>	All this is mine; tomorrow it'll be yours The flat/apartment belongs to my son-in-law
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29.2.7 Ser to denote impressions

<i>Me es/resulta simpática</i> <i>Esto me es/resulta molesto</i> <i>Todo le era distinto</i> (A. Carpentier, Cuba)	I find her likeable This is uncomfortable for me Everything seemed different to her
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29.2.8 Ser of events

If 'to be' means 'to be held' or 'to happen' it must be translated by *ser*:

<i>La fiesta es/ise celebra en su casa</i> <i>Hay un incendio en el edificio pero no</i> <i>sé en qué piso es</i> <i>¿Dónde es la manifestación?</i> <i>El entierro sería a las cinco</i> (G. García Márquez, Colombia)	The party is at his place There's a fire in the building but I don't know which floor it's on Where is the demonstration? The funeral was to be at five
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Use of *estar* may imply a physical object. Compare:

<i>¿Dónde es la conferencia?</i> <i>¿Dónde está la conferencia?</i>	Where's the lecture (being held)? Where's the lecture? (i.e. the lecture notes or ...)
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Note

Also *el jarro es/está encima del aparador* 'the vase belongs/goes on top of the sideboard', as opposed to ... *está* ... 'is on ...'.

29.3 Uses of *estar*29.3.1 *Estar* to describe state as opposed to identity or nature

Estar is used with adjectives that indicate mood, physical condition, temporary physical appearance or other non-characteristic features in general. Note the difference between *es guapa* 'she's good-looking' and *está guapa* 'she's looking good/attractive':

<i>Está más bien triste</i> <i>Estuvo enfermo una temporada</i> <i>Hoy no estoy muy católico</i> <i>Estoy segura de lo que te digo</i> <i>Estaba rojo de vergüenza</i> <i>El agua que se añada tiene que estar caliente</i> <i>El televisor está estropeado</i> <i>Está parado desde febrero</i> <i>Estuvo callado todo el tiempo</i> <i>Nueva York está llena de centavos</i> (J. Aldecoa, Spain)	He's rather sad He was ill/ (US 'sick') for a time I don't feel very well today I'm certain of what I'm telling you He was red with shame The water to be added has to be hot The television doesn't work He's been out of work since February He was silent all the time New York is full of windows
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Notes

- (i) The pervasive use of the passive with *ser* in written Latin-American Spanish, especially to denote habitual or continuous actions, may produce sentences which require *estar* in Spain. This seems to be particularly frequent in Mexico: *una de las mesas era ocupada por el doctor Bernstein* (C. Fuentes, Mexico, Spain *estaba ocupada*) 'one of the tables was occupied by Doctor Bernstein'.
(ii) *Ser* *hecho* de for *estar* *hecho* de sounds poetic or archaic: *¡y cuán frágil el barro de que somos hechos!* (R. del Valle-Inclán, Spain, written in the 1890s) 'and how fragile the clay of which we are made!'

29.3.2 *Estar* de

Estar *de* + adjective or noun to indicate mood, temporary employment or situation:

<i>Está de buen/mal humor</i> <i>Está de camarero en Inglaterra</i> <i>Está de verano</i> <i>Está de viaje</i> <i>Estamos de charla</i> <i>¿Estáis de permiso?</i> <i>Están de broma</i>	He's in a good/bad mood He's working as a waiter in England He's taking his summer holidays/vacation He's travelling We're having a chat Are you on leave? They're fooling about
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Colloquially:

<i>Estáis de un guapo subido</i> <i>Estaba de un antipático</i> ...	You look especially handsome He was in such a bad mood ...
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29.3.3 *Estar* con

Estar followed by *con* + noun:

Estaba con una cara malísima
Estaba con un traje de chaqueta muy bonito

He looked terrible
She was wearing a beautiful suit

29.3.4 *Estar* + adverb

Estar followed by an adverb or an adjective used as an adverb:

—¿Cómo estás?—*Estoy bien/mal*
El nombre está mal. Se llamaba Luis José
(Cumbi 16, Spain)
Estamos jálal
How are you? 'I'm well/not well'
The name is wrong. His name was Luis José
We're feeling rotten

Adjectives used as adverbs are invariable in form, e.g. *estamos mal* 'we're in trouble' / 'we're in a bad way'.

29.3.5 *Estar* que

Está que muere
Hoy estás que no hay quien te aguante
He's in an exceedingly bad mood (lit. 'he's ready to bite')
You're unbearable today

29.3.6 *Estar* to indicate location

(For *ser* used for the location of events see 29.2.8.)

Segovia está en España
El cerro está en el centro
No está (en casa)
Está encima de todo
Segovia is in Spain
The cherry tree is in the middle
He's not at home
It's on top of everything

But with nouns that are permanent fixtures or features there is a colloquial tendency to use *ser*:

¿Dónde es la casa de tu amigo?
Aquí era la plaza de las Carreras
(J. L. Borges, Argentina, dialogue)
Turku es en Finlandia, ¿no?
Where's your friend's house?
This is where Carreras Square used to be
Turku's in Finland, isn't it?

Estar would also be correct in these three sentences.

29.3.7 *Estar* meaning 'to suit', or 'to fit'

Este traje te está muy bien
El abrigo te está corto
El puesto de ministro le está grande
This dress suits you
The coat is too short for you
The ministerial job is too big for him

For *estar* with *por* and *para* see 34.14.8.

29.3.8 Idiomatic use of *andar*, *encontrarse* and *hallarse* for *estar*

Andar 'to walk' is sometimes used in colloquial language instead of *estar* when the subject is human and the verb is followed by an adjective or participle. This is only possible when the phrase refers to some kind of activity or to dress or attitude. One could not say **ando calvo* for *estoy calvo* 'I'm bald':

Miguel dice que andan recelosos y no le falta razón (M. Delibes, Spain, dialogue)
Andan muy atareados estos días
Miguel says they're suspicious, and he's right
They're got a lot of work these days

where my glasses have got to', *¿dónde anda el coche, tía?* (M. Delibes, Spain, dialogue) 'hey, whereabouts is the car?'

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?', *no me encuentro con fuerzas para seguir* 'I'm not strong enough to go on'. *Hallarse* is used in formal or literary language: *me halló enfermo y fatigado* 'I'm feeling ill and tired'.

29.4 Ser or estar?

29.4.1 Ser and estar more or less interchangeable

(a) With words indicating marital status:

Sale con una chica que es/está divorciada
Tiene que mantener a su madre que es/está viuda
Le pregunté si estaba casado
Pero si es casado debe estar cenando en casa a estas horas (M. Puig, Argentina, dialogue)

He's going out with a girl who's divorced
 He has to keep his widowed mother
 I asked him whether he was married
 But if he's married (i.e. 'a married man') he must be at home having his supper at this time of day

The tendency is to use *ser* for a stranger, although *estar* is not wrong. One would usually ask *¿es usted casado?* 'are you married?', but two friends meeting again after some time would say *¿estás casado?* or *¿todavía estás soltero?* 'are you married?' or 'are you still single?'

(b) With *calvo*, *gordo* and *delgado*, *estar* is always used when there has been a change of state. Elsewhere the two verbs are practically interchangeable except in generalizations, when *ser* is required:

¡Mujer, pero qué delgada estás!
Siempre ha sido calvo/gordo, pero ahora está más calvo/gordo que nunca
Dentro de cien años todos seremos calvos (L. Rafael Sánchez, dialogue, Puerto Rico)
Ayer conocí a la novia de mi primo. Parece simpática pero está/les muy delgada
Las mujeres de esa tribu son muy gordas (generalization)

Good heavens, haven't you lost weight!
 He's always been bald/thin but now he's baldier/thinner than ever
 We'll all be bald in a hundred years
 Yesterday I met my cousin's girlfriend. She seems nice but she's very thin
 The women of that tribe are very fat

(c) With adjectives describing social manner when 'to be' = 'to behave':

Estuvo/Fue muy cortés conmigo
Siempre estás/les cariñoso
Tienes que estar/ser más amable con él
But hoy has sido bueno 'you've behaved well today' because *estar bueno* means 'tasty', 'appetising' and therefore also sexually attractive. Note, however
¡Hoy has estado bueno!
 You had a good day today! (ironical, i.e. 'I don't think...')

She behaved very courteously towards me
 She's always affectionate
 You must be kinder to him

Estar cannot be used for general statements about behaviour: *antiguamente los ingleses eran muy corteses* 'formerly the English were very courteous'.

(d) With adjectives applied to events and with *nido* and *atmósfera*:

La situación es/está caótica
La fiesta fue/estuvo muy animada
La vida es/está cara hoy día

The situation is chaotic
 The party was very lively
 Life is expensive nowadays

But *la vida es difícil/maravillosa/lamarga* 'life is difficult/wonderful/bitter' can only be general comments on life. *La vida está difícil* means 'life is difficult now'.

(e) With adjectives referring to weather applied to *día* and *tiempo*:

El día es/está bueno
Es/Está un tiempo soleado, agradable

The weather is nice today
 The weather is sunny and pleasant

(but see 29.2.1, note (i) for *estar* before noun phrases)

29.4.2 Ser and estar with prices and quantities

¿Cuánto/a cuánto/a cómo son las uvas?
Son a cincuenta pesetas el kilo
¿Cuánto (es lo que) le debo?
¿Cuántos somos hoy para comer?
Somos doce en mi familia
Los sobrevivientes fueron pocos

How much are the grapes?
 Fifty pesetas a kilo
 How much do I owe you?
 How many are we for lunch today?
 There are twelve of us in my family
 Few people survived

Also:

¿A cuánto/a cómo están las uvas?
¿A cuánto/a cómo están esas acciones?

How much are the grapes (at this moment)?
 What's the price of those shares?

29.4.3 Estar implying impression or change of condition

When *estar* denotes impression, sensation or appearance, it often calls for translation by a special verb in English, e.g. 'to look', 'to taste', 'to feel' or 'to get'. Use of *estar* rather than *ser* often shows there has been a change of condition. Compare:

Es muy guapa
Está muy guapa
Este niño es muy alto
Este niño está muy alto
¡Qué fuerte eres!
¿Qué fuerte estás!
Este sillón es ya viejo
Este sillón está ya viejo
*El pollo es riquísimo**
El pollo está riquísimo
*El café es horrible**
El café está horrible
Tráelo como está
Eres muy española
Estás muy española

She's very good-looking
 She's looking very attractive
 This child is very tall
 This child has grown very tall
 How strong you are! / Aren't you strong!
 How strong you are! (these days)
 This armchair is old
 This armchair is getting old
 [The] chicken is very good
 The chicken tastes delicious
 (The) coffee is horrible
 The coffee tastes horrible
 Bring it any way you can
 Bring it as it is
 You're very Spanish
 You're looking very Spanish (or behaving like a typical Spanish woman)

The examples marked with an asterisk are ambiguous: *el pollo es riquísimo* is either a general statement about chicken or it could mean 'the chicken (uncooked) is very good quality'. *Estar* could only mean 'to taste'.

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*.

29.4.4 Ser and estar involving change of meaning

There are some words whose meaning is radically affected by choice of *ser* or *estar*. The following list is not exhaustive:

<i>ser aburrido</i>	boring	<i>estar aburrido</i>	to be bored
<i>ser atento</i>	courteous	<i>estar atento</i>	attentive
<i>ser bueno</i>	good	<i>estar bueno</i>	tasty
<i>ser cansado</i>	tiresome	<i>estar cansado</i>	tired
<i>ser católico</i>	catholic	<i>no estar católico</i>	unwell
<i>ser decidido</i>	resolute	<i>estar decidido</i>	decided
<i>ser consciente</i>	aware	<i>estar consciente</i>	conscious (not asleep or knocked out)
<i>ser despierto</i>	sharp/alert	<i>estar despierto</i>	awake
<i>ser un enfermo</i>	be an invalid	<i>estar enfermo</i>	be ill
<i>ser interesado</i>	self-seeking	<i>estar interesado</i>	interested
<i>ser listo</i>	clever	<i>estar listo</i>	to be ready
<i>ser (un) loco</i>	scatterbrained	<i>estar loco</i>	mad
<i>ser malo</i>	bad	<i>estar malo</i>	ill
<i>ser negro</i>	black	<i>estar negro</i>	very irritated
<i>ser orgulloso</i>	proud	<i>estar orgulloso</i>	proud (of something/ someone)
<i>ser rico</i>	rich	<i>estar rico</i>	delicious
<i>ser torpe</i>	slow-witted	<i>estar torpe</i>	clumsy, moving with difficulty
<i>ser verde</i>	green/smotty	<i>estar verde</i>	unripe
<i>ser violento</i>	violent/	<i>estar violento</i>	embarrassed
<i>ser vivo</i>	embarrassing	<i>estar vivo</i>	alive
(<i>ser un vivo</i>)	sharp/alert		
	be unscrupulous		

30

Existential sentences

30.1 General

'Existential sentences' are sentences that refer to the existence of things: 'there's bread', 'there's no time', 'there is a planet called Pluto', 'God exists'/'there is a God', etc. In Spanish such sentences usually involve the special verb *haber* (present indicative *hay*), which means 'there is/are'. However, the picture is complicated for foreign students because of the existence of another verb, *estar*, which often means 'to be located'/'to be there'.

30.2 Haber (hay)

For the conjugation of *haber* see 13.3.22.

30.2.1 Basic uses

Haber has two uses: (a) as an auxiliary used to form perfect tenses, e.g. *han dicho* 'they've said' (discussed at 14.8); (b) as a verb meaning 'there is'/'there are', cf. French *il y a*, German *es gibt*.

In the latter sense the verb occurs only in the third-person singular (see notes (i) and (ii) for popular or colloquial exceptions). It is conjugated exactly as the third-person singular of the auxiliary *haber*, except that its present indicative is *hay*, not *ha*. In this chapter, *haber* in the sense of 'there is/are' is referred to as '*hay*' to avoid confusion with the auxiliary verb.

Hay can occur in any non-continuous tense with the meanings 'there is/are'/'were/will be/have been', etc. However, it does not mean '... is/are'/'were there' = *está/están/estaban (ahí/allí)*. The relationship between *hay* and *estar* is discussed further at 30.3. Examples of *hay*:

<i>Hay</i> muchas chicas de mi edad y más jóvenes (J. Mariás, Spain)	There were many girls of my age and younger
<i>Hay</i> casos peores, <i>hay</i> quienes no pueden volver del exilio (A. Mastretta, Mexico)	There are worse cases, there are people who can't return from exile
—¿Qué <i>hay</i> ? —Lo que <i>hay</i> es que estoy <i>harto</i>	'What's happening/How're things?' 'I'm fed up — that's what's happening!'
<i>Hubo</i> muchas noches que salíamos a recorrer su barrio (G. Cabrera Infante, Cuba, dialogue)	There were many nights when we went out for a walk round her part of town
¿Qué <i>hubo</i> ? ¿Qué <i>hubo</i> ? (Colombia and surrounding areas only)	How're things?

hubo was used in the original text.