

A New  
Reference  
Grammar  
of Modern  
*Spanish*

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THIRD EDITION

(d) *Entonces*, as well as meaning 'then' in the sense of 'just after', is much used to introduce a conclusion:

- ¿Te gusto entonces?* (G. Cabrera Infante, Cuba, dialogue) Do you like me, then?  
*Entonces estamos de acuerdo?* So, are we in agreement?  
*Entonces, no puedo sino concluir que usted es el culpable* In that case, I can only conclude that you are the guilty person

(e) *Pues* is discussed elsewhere, and it can mean 'since' in literary language; see 33.5.3. It is constantly used in colloquial language to introduce conclusions:

- No me gusta el color.* —*Pues cámbialo.* 'I don't like the color (of it).' 'Then change it.'  
*Pues eso mismo te iba a decir* That's just what I was going to tell you

### 33.11.11 Agreement

There are numerous ways of agreeing with the previous information or of asserting something as self-evident.

(a) *Claro* is probably the most common, and is found in all styles, although it is slightly colloquial:

- Claro, 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  
*Claro está que no quiero presionar a nadie* It's obvious I don't want to put pressure on anyone

Sometimes it makes *sf* 'yes' unnecessary:

- ¿Puedo pasar unos días en tu casa?* 'Can I stay a few days with you?' 'Yes, of course, any time you want'  
 —*Hombre, claro, cuando quieras*

*Está claro* (Latin America *es claro*) is discussed in the note to 29.2.5.

(b) *Desde luego* means 'of course' and is in daily use, at least in Spain:

- Desde luego, si quieres entrar tendrás que pagar* Obviously, if you want to go in you'll have to pay

(c) *En efecto* and *efectivamente* both signify agreement with what has preceded:

- En efecto/Efectivamente todos estaban de acuerdo conmigo* They were indeed all in agreement with me  
 —*Bueno, estamos fastidiados.* 'Well, we've had it/we're in trouble.'  
 —*Efectivamente/En efecto* 'You're right'

(d) *Ya* has many uses, listed at 31.7.1. It is often used to indicate agreement with the previous statement, although uttered 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 inteligente que tú* —*Ya, ya ...* 'I'm smarter than you' 'Yeah, sure ...'

(e) *De verdad* insists on the truth of a statement, rather like *en serio* 'seriously':

- De verdad te lo ruego, no te vayas* 'Please, really, need about him'

# 34

## Prepositions

Prepositional usage is more subject than other areas of syntax to the arbitrariness of linguistic change, and the whole subject is plagued with quibbles and doubts. In this chapter prepositions are treated in alphabetical order and special emphasis has been given to aspects of prepositional usage likely to be unfamiliar to English speakers.

|                                                                  |                                       |                                                            |                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>a</i> 'to', 'at' 34.1                                         | <i>contra</i> 'against' 34.6          | <i>hacia</i> 'towards' 34.11                               | <i>sin</i> 'without' 34.16                             |
| <i>ante</i> , <i>delante de</i> 'in front of', 'faced with' 34.2 | <i>de</i> 'of', 'from' 34.7           | <i>hasta</i> 'until', 'as far as' 34.12                    | <i>sobre</i> 'over', 'on', 'about' 34.17               |
| <i>bajo</i> , <i>debajo de</i> 'beneath', 'underneath' 34.3      | <i>desde</i> 'from' 34.7.5            |                                                            |                                                        |
|                                                                  | <i>durante</i> 'during' 34.8          | <i>mediante</i> 'by means of' 34.13                        | <i>tras</i> , <i>detrás de</i> 'after', 'behind' 34.18 |
| <i>cabe</i> (archaic) 'next to' 34.4                             | <i>en</i> 'in', 'on', 'at' 34.9       | <i>para</i> and <i>por</i> 'for', 'because of', etc. 34.14 |                                                        |
| <i>con</i> 'with' 34.5                                           | <i>entre</i> 'between', 'among' 34.10 | <i>según</i> 'according to' 34.15                          |                                                        |

Many of these can be combined with other words to form prepositional phrases such as *debajo de* 'underneath', *frente a* 'opposite', *a razón de* 'at the rate of', etc. A list of common prepositional phrases is included at 34.19.

English speakers should take literally the meaning of the Spanish word *posición*, 'something placed in front', since Spanish prepositions appear only immediately before noun phrases. This makes the structure of English sentences like 'the house I'm talking about' impossible in Spanish: *la casa de la que estoy hablando*, never *\*la casa que estoy hablando de*.

For the same reason many grammarians, including the Academy, reject 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* here stands in front of a conjunction, *y*. They prefer ... *es hecha por los habitantes del pueblo y para ellos mismos*. Similarly, 'I'll go with or without you' should be translated *iré contigo o sin ti*, not *\*iré con o sin ti*. But this 'rule' is constantly broken, and the linguist Valentín García Yebra<sup>1</sup> sees no objection to phrases like *el tráfico aéreo desde y hacia Berlín* 'air traffic to and from Berlin', *la imagen construida en y por el texto* 'the



Vino a la vuelta  
a orillas del mar  
Ot pasos a mi espalda  
Se pasa horas sentado al ordenador  
Se arrodilló a los pies de la Virgen  
Está con el agua al cuello  
a la izquierda/derecha de  
a lo lejos/en la distancia  
Se sentaron al sol/a la luz/al calor del  
fuego/a la sombra/al amparo de un roble

## Compare:

Esperame en la parada del autobús  
Estaba parado en un semáforo  
Mario está en el banco  
Los niños están en el colegio  
(cf. mi hijo todavía no va al colegio)  
... para que el coche no estuviera tanto  
tiempo estacionado en la puerta (G.  
García Márquez, Colombia. Coche here  
refers to a horse-drawn carriage)  
La vi en la puerta de la iglesia

## Notes

- (i) A la puerta is also good Spanish for 'at the door', but we found that some American informants preferred en – but compare Morelli habla del napolitano que se pasó años sentado a la puerta de su casa (J. Cortázar, Argentina) Morelli speaks of the Neapolitan who spent years sitting at the door of his house.  
(ii) Spanish thus has no prepositions that can differentiate 'he's at the hospital' and 'he's in (the) hospital': verbs are used instead – ha ido al hospital and está en el hospital.

(e) Manner (adverbial phrases of manner with *a* are numerous):

a pie/a mano/a lápiz  
a golpes/a tiros/a patadas  
Pedía socorro a gritos  
un documento escrito a máquina  
El servicio es a voluntad del cliente  
Las putas están a punto  
Estoy a dieta  
a la buena de Dios  
a oscuras/a la luz del día  
Las verduras se pueden guisar al vapor  
Estaba vestido a la inglesa  
a la manera de Dickens (M. Torres, Spain)

## Note

The curious construction with *a* found in the phrase *sois dos a ganar* 'there are two of you earning' may perhaps be included under this heading.

## (f) In certain time phrases:

Bonos del Estado a diez años  
Se casaron a los veinte años  
(Se casaron con veinte años)  
al día siguiente/al otro día  
a la mañana siguiente  
a la caída de la noche/al alba  
al mismo tiempo  
A su recepción pagaré la cantidad  
estipulada  
a su regreso, a su llegada  
Estamos a miércoles/a quince  
tres veces al por día  
Se enfada al por la menor provocación

A is particularly common in the construction *al* + infinitive where it means 'on ... -ing', e.g. *al ver* 'on seeing', *al volverse* 'as he turned round/back'. See 18.3.3.

## Notes

- (i) One can say *a su muerte se dividió el reino en tres partes* 'at his death the kingdom was divided into three parts', but only *cuando nació ...* 'at his birth ...'  
(ii) Note the construction *ya deben estar al llegar* 'they must be about to arrive'.

(g) To translate 'of' or 'like' after verbs meaning 'smell', 'taste', 'sound', and also after the nouns derived from some of these:

Me suena a cuento chino  
Esto sabe a pescado  
En esta casa huele a quemado  
La buena leche huele a fresca  
Esta mantequilla apesta a ajo  
Había un leve olor a fritura y a crema  
bronceadora (F. Umbral, Spain)  
La ginebra tiene un sabor a agua de colonia  
Gin has a taste like eau de Cologne

## (h) 'Fitted with', 'propelled by':

Grammarians reject *a* as a Gallicism in the following constructions, but most of them are normal in everyday language:

olla a presión  
caldera al/de gas-oil  
motor al/de dos tiempos  
un suplemento a color (El País; also  
en color)  
un avión al/de dos motores  
un coche que va al por metanol

## Note

The use of *a* to denote an ingredient is occasionally seen in advertising language but it should not be imitated: *crema bronceadora a lanolina* 'suntan cream with lanolin' (better *con lanolina*).

## (i) Rate, measure, speed, amount, distance:

Se vende a mil pesos el metro  
¿A cómo están las peras?  
Volaba a más de dos mil kilómetros

It's on sale at 1,000 pesos a metre  
How much are the pears?  
It was flying at more than 2,000 km per

Compraba libros de segunda mano que  
luego revendía o cambiaba a razón de dos  
por uno (L. Coytiso, Spain)  
Está a cinco manzanas (Latin America):  
cuadrados de aquí

si Vd. tiene un 80386 a 20 Mhz y un  
modem a 28.800 bps ... (computer  
manual, Spain)

a monitores  
Trabaja a ratos/la veces

(j) It translates 'from' after a number of words with such meanings as 'steal', 'confiscate', 'buy', and after *oír* 'to hear':

Le robaron una sortija a mi tía  
Le compró un coche a su vecino  
una banda de traficantes de drogas, a los  
que aprehendieron trece kilos de cocaína  
(La Vanguardia, Spain)

Se lo ofí decir a Amparo  
Eso se lo has oído a tu padre

And similarly verbs such as *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'.

(k) Before certain types of direct object (the so-called 'personal *a*', e.g. *vi al gitano* 'I saw the gypsy'). See Chapter 22 for detailed discussion.

(l) After verbs meaning 'begin', 'start', 'get ready to ...':

Rompí a llorar  
Eché a correr  
El cielo empezaba a despejarse

and similarly after *comenzar* 'to begin', *ponerse* 'to start to', *prepararse* 'to get ready to', *disponerse* 'to prepare oneself to', *meterse* 'to take up ...' (usually with some implication of futility, as in *no te metas a (psicoterapia) con él, porque solamente complicarás las cosas* 'don't get into being a psychotherapist with him, because you'll only complicate things').

(m) After numerous verbs, adjectives and adverbs which must be learnt separately:

Aspiraba a hacerse médico  
Acostumbraban a hacerlo  
Tienes que lucerte al trabajo  
Prefiero una vida mediocre a ser héroe  
Te ayudaré a apretar las tuercas  
Et viejo argumento de que la religión  
sirve de freno a los instintos  
Se ha convertido al budismo  
jugar al fútbol/hockey  
tocar algo al acordeón/la guitarra  
Pudo saltarse agarrándose a/de un árbol  
a tree

Tendrán emboscadas a las Ninfas  
(J. L. Borges, Argentina)

They laid ambushes for the Nymphs

(n) To link two nouns whenever ambiguity might arise from the use of *de*: *el amor de Dios* = 'God's love' and *el amor a Dios* 'love for God'. Often either preposition is possible. A is also often used to link two nouns when a common verbal phrase exists which also requires *a*, e.g. *les tiene miedo a los toros* 'he's afraid of bulls', *su miedo a los toros* 'his fear of bulls':

el abrazo de un padre a su hijo  
el amor a la patria  
el respeto a la autoridad  
Lo denunciaron como traidor al/de su clase  
La Casa Blanca confirmó el boicot a los  
Juegos de Moscú (Cambridge, Spain)  
Insinué algo en el prólogo al libro de  
Lafage ... (O. Paz, Mexico; del possible)  
Espero que no sea una referencia personal  
a mí  
El culto al sol tendría sus ventajas  
El departamento se encargará de la  
protección al/de la carretera

#### Note

With words like *miedo* 'fear' or *amor* 'love' one can use *de* if no ambiguity arises; compare *así que tiene miedo de las cucarachas* (C. Martín Gaité, Spain, dialogue) so you're afraid of cockroaches ...

#### 34.2 Ante

'Before' (i.e. 'in front of') or 'in the presence of' and, like the English 'before', it can in literary usage have a spatial meaning, 'facing'/'in front of'; compare *me eché en la cama ante la televisión* (J. Marías, Spain) 'I lay down on the bed in front of/before the television', *detuvo el coche ante la que parecía ser mansión de los Conesals* (M. Vázquez Montalbán, Spain) 'he stopped the car in front of/outside what seemed to be the Conesals' mansion', *ante el negro y el niño había dos tazas de chocolate* (J. L. Borges, Argentina) 'in front of/before the black man and the child were two cups of chocolate'. *Delante de* is used in everyday language for this spatial meaning. *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:

Se sentía nervioso al comparecer ante el  
tribunal  
Ante mí/Frente a mí/Delante de mí se  
elevaba una enorme torre  
... y ellas presumían de parienta famosa  
ante los otros viejos (M. Torres, Spain)  
ante este dilema ...  
ante tanatós insulto ...  
Ante tantas posibilidades, no sabía cuál  
escoger

He felt nervous on appearing before the  
court  
Before me there rose an enormous tower  
... and they boasted of having a famous  
female relative in front of/in the presence  
of the other old women  
faced with this dilemma ...  
in the face of such an insult ...  
Faced with so many possibilities, he didn't  
know which to choose

## Notes

- (i) *Delante* de makes it clear 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 further details about *delante* de, see 31.6.8.
- (ii) *Frente a* for *ante* in phrases like *frente a estos problemas* 'faced with these problems' is very widespread.

## 34.3 Bajo

*Bajo* means 'beneath' or 'under'. It may be a literary variant of *debajo de* 'underneath' (discussed at 31.6.6), but in this sense it is spatially less specific (cf. 'under' and 'underneath'): *se resguardaron bajo un haya* 'they sheltered under/beneath a beech tree' but *enterró el botín debajo de un roble* 'he buried the loot underneath (i.e. under the roots of) an oak tree'.

Carnicer notes that for those educated speakers who use *bajo* the difference is that it implies 'a good distance under' or 'under but not close to or touching' – *bajo una masa de nubes* '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' – whereas *debajo de* implies 'underneath and close to whatever is on top': *hay mucho polvo debajo de la alfombra* 'there's a lot of dust underneath the carpet'. *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'.

*Bajo* 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', etc.:

|                                                                                       |                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>No hay nada nuevo bajo el sol</i> (cf. <i>sentarse al sol</i> 'to sit in the sun') | There's nothing new under the sun                       |
| <i>bajo las estrellas/la lluvia/un cielo azul</i>                                     | beneath the stars/in the rain/beneath a blue sky        |
| <i>bajo tierra</i> (or <i>debajo de la tierra</i> )                                   | underground                                             |
| <i>bajo la monarquía/la república/el socialismo</i>                                   | under the monarchy/republic/socialism, etc.             |
| <i>La temperatura alcanzó treinta bajo cero</i>                                       | The temperature reached thirty below zero               |
| <i>bajo tantos golpes</i> ...                                                         | under so many blows ...                                 |
| <i>bajo los efectos de la anestesia</i>                                               | under the effects of the anaesthetic                    |
| <i>bajo juramento</i>                                                                 | under oath                                              |
| <i>Bajo la máscara se percibe el lento trabajo de la verdad</i> (M. Torres, Spain)    | Beneath the mask the slow workings of truth are visible |

## Note

*Abajo* de is often heard for *debajo de* in Latin America, but it is not accepted in Spain.

## 34.4 Cabe

An archaic or rustic equivalent of *junto a/cerca de* 'by' / 'near' still occasionally found in Latin-American authors.

## 34.5 Con

(a) In many contexts it coincides with the English 'with', but it is used more widely than the latter.

Sentences like 'the boy with the blue Mercedes' require *de*: *el chico del Mercedes azul*. But if 'wearing' or 'carrying' are implied, *con* is usual unless the article is habitually associated with the person: *compara nunca te he visto con gafas* 'I've never seen you with glasses', but *¿te acuerdas del viejo del impermeable que venía todos los días?* 'do you remember the old man with/in the raincoat who used to come every day?'

|                                                            |                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <i>Fui a la reunión con Niso</i>                           | I went to the meeting with Niso             |
| <i>Llegaron dos policías con perros</i>                    | Two policemen with dogs arrived             |
| <i>Yo sí te he visto con camisa de seda</i>                | I have seen you in a silk shirt             |
| <i>Está escrito con la lápiz</i>                           | It's written with a/in pencil               |
| <i>No podía quitárselo con una llave normal</i>            | I couldn't get it off with a normal spanner |
| <i>con la enfermera que está ...</i>                       | and with her being so ill ...               |
| <i>Nos trató con mucha cortesía</i>                        | He treated us with much courtesy            |
| <i>Se con miel/café con leche</i>                          | tea with honey/coffee with milk             |
| <i>Se produjeron varios enfrentamientos con la policía</i> | There were several clashes with the police  |
| <i>Se levantó con el sol</i>                               | He got up with the sun                      |
| <i>con la llegada del otoño</i>                            | with the arrival of autumn                  |

## Notes

(i) *Con* cannot be used in combination with the nominalizer *el*: contrast *el chico con/de la americana blanca* 'the boy with the white jacket' and *el de la americana blanca* and 'the one (masc.) with/in the white jacket'. Phrases like *\*el con gafas* for 'the one with glasses' are not Spanish.

(ii) *Con* differs from *a* in phrases like *con la llegada de la primavera* 'with the arrival of spring' in that *a la llegada* implies 'at the moment of the arrival of', which is too punctual for the onset of a season. Compare *todos se marcharon a la llegada de la policía* 'they all left on the arrival of the police' and *con la llegada de Pepe, todo empezó a cambiar* 'with Pepe's arrival, everything began to change'.

(b) 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'. But if the object of the attitude does not benefit by it, *para* is not used:

|                                         |                                            |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <i>Es muy crítico con su hijo</i>       | He's very critical with/towards his son    |
| <i>Eres muy cruel con tu girlfriend</i> | You're very cruel to your girlfriend       |
| <i>Es poco confiado con sus colegas</i> | He's not very trusting with his colleagues |

(c) It may be used with expressions signifying meeting, encounter, collision, 'facing up to', 'struggle with', etc.:

|                                                                        |                                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Me encontré/Tropecé hoy con tu jefe</i>                             | I ran into/met your boss today                                            |
| <i>Ha vuelto con su marido (ha vuelto a is not used in this sense)</i> | She's gone back to her husband (or 'she's come back with her husband')    |
| <i>Tengo que vérmelas con el vecino</i>                                | I'll have to have it out with the neighbour (i.e. have a frank talk with) |
| <i>Iba en la moto y se dio un golpe con/contra un poste</i>            | He was on his motor bike and crashed into a post                          |
| <i>Mi bicicleta chocó con un camión</i>                                | My bicycle ran into a lorry                                               |

*Tendremos que enfrentarnos con el problema/enfrentar el problema*  
*Los ingleses suelen dudar con el subjuntivo*

We'll have to face up to the problem

English people usually hesitate over the subjunctive

(d) It may – strangely to English speakers – mean 'containing':

*un vaso con/de agua, un saco con/de patatas*

a glass of water/sack of potatoes

*Llevo una cesta con pan, huevos, uvas y vino (de is not possible here)*

He was carrying a basket of bread, eggs, grapes and wine

*una jeringa con morfina*

a syringe full of morphine

Note

This use eliminates any ambiguity caused by *de*, which either means 'full of' – *una cesta de huevos* is 'a basketful of eggs' and it cannot denote the container but not the contents: compare *una botella de coñac* 'a bottle of cognac' or 'a cognac bottle', but *una botella con coñac* 'a bottle with cognac in it'.

(e) 'Despite' or some similar phrase (*a pesar de* is often an equivalent):

*Con/A pesar de todos sus esfuerzos, nunca llegó a coronel*

Despite/for all his efforts, he never made the rank of colonel

*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 con lo guapa que estarías con el pelo recogido ...*

Despite everything, life isn't so awful to think how attractive you'd look with your hair up ...

(f) Con plus an infinitive may, like the gerund, have a conditional sense:

*Con hacer (or haciendo) lo que yo os digo, todo irá bien*

Provided you (pl.) do what I say everything will go well

*Con tener un poco más de suerte me hubiera hecho rico*

If I'd had a bit more luck I'd have got rich

*Sólo/Solo 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. This must not be confused with the conjunction *conque* or with *con* plus a relative pronoun:

*Con que me pagaran mis gastos me conformaba*

I would be quite happy if they paid my expenses

(g) It may, like the gerund, mean 'as a result of':

*Se nos ha ido la tarde con hablar/hablando*

The afternoon's gone with all this talking

*No conseguiréis nada con tratarme/tratándose de esa manera*

You'll achieve nothing by treating me that way

*Con cambiar/Cambiando de empleo no resolvéis nada*

You'll solve nothing by changing jobs

(h) It 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

*Está muy preocupado con sus negocios*

He's very taken up with his business affairs

*Se puso enfermo (enfermó de, Lat. Am. se enfermó de) paludismo*

He fell ill with/from malaria

*Se mareó con el viraje del tren*

(S)he felt nauseous/(British 'sick') because of the swaying of the train

*Me contento con lo que tengo*

I content myself with what I have

*Se alegró con/de la noticia del nacimiento de su nieto*

(S)he cheered up at the news of his/her grandson's birth

Note

Miscellaneous examples of *con* used in ways unfamiliar to English speakers: *hace años que él se escribe con ella* 'he and she have been writing to one another for years', *murio con más de setenta años* 'she died aged more than seventy', *usted fue el último que lo vio con vida* 'you were the last one to see him alive', *voy a verme con ella esta noche* 'I'm seeing her tonight'.

### 34.6 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* before a verb:

*El régimen ha organizado una campaña contra/en contra de la corrupción*

The regime has organized a campaign against corruption

*Contra lo que creen algunos, yo no soy pesimista*

Despite/to the contrary of what some believe, I am not a pessimist

*Apoya tu pala contra el árbol*

Lean your spade against the tree

*En ese caso optarían por lanzar un misil contra el enemigo*

In that case they would opt for launching a missile at the enemy

*Lanzó la piedra contra el árbol*

He threw the stone at the tree (intending to strike it)

*(cf. se la lanzó al árbol)*

He threw it up at the tree e.g. a lasso or rope

*Contiene inyectarse contra la hepatitis antes de viajar a esas regiones (not \*inyectarse para ...)*

It's a good idea to get immunized against/for hepatitis before travelling to those regions

*¿Está usted en contra de que lo ligan ellos?*

Are you against them doing it?

Notes

(i) For *contra mí*, *en contra tuya*, etc. 'against you' see note to 8.7.

(ii) The use of *contra* for *cuando* in such phrases as *cuanto más trabajes, más te dan* 'the more you work, the more they give you', heard in some Latin-American varieties and in substandard speech in Spain, should be avoided. See 5.11 for details.

### 34.7 De

#### 34.7.1 General uses

Section (a) covers those uses of *de* which correspond to the English 'of' or to the genitive ending 's: these sentences should give English speakers no great problems. French speakers must resist the temptation to replace *de* by *a*: *c'est à vous?* = *¿es de usted?* 'is it yours?'

los discos de mi primo  
la matrícula del coche  
las bisagras de la puerta  
el primerojuno de mayo  
Ese ataque es del profesor  
¿De quién es esto?

my cousin's records  
the car number-plate  
the hinges of/on the door  
the first of May  
That briefcase is the teacher's  
Whose is this?

un traje de baño  
un reloj de pulsera  
unos recortes de prensa

a swimsuit  
a wrist-watch  
some press-cuttings

(b) To create 'compound' nouns, usually – but not always – expressed in English by the juxtaposition of nouns. Note that *de* in such cases is not followed by a definite article:

### Note

This is the usual way of forming the equivalents of English compound nouns, but there are other methods, e.g. *un año luz* 'a light-year' or *la industria hotelera* 'the hotel industry' mentioned at 2.1.7b and 4.12 respectively.

(c) Origin (see 34.7.5 for the difference between *de* and *desde*):

Soy de México  
un ser de otro planeta  
un vino de sotera  
Este manuscrito es de la Biblioteca Nacional  
una oda del siglo quince  
un dolor de cabeza

I'm from Mexico  
a being from another planet  
a vintage wine  
This manuscript is from the National Library  
a fifteenth-century ode  
a headache

### Notes

(i) English speakers tend to use the preposition *en* to join two nouns to indicate belonging to or originating from a place. Spanish strongly prefers *de*: *los hombres de Grecia* 'the men in Greece' (= Greek men), *las flores de las Andes* 'the flowers in (= of) the Andes', *las colinas de tierra adentro* 'the hills in the interior/inland are greener'. The temptation is particularly strong after a superlative: *este es el mejor restaurante de Madrid* 'this is the best restaurant in Madrid', *el más antiguo monumento del Perú* 'the most ancient monument in Peru', *el mejor momento de mi vida* 'the best moment in/of my life'.

However, spoken and journalistic Mexican Spanish regularly uses *en*: *el plan más ambicioso en el mundo* (Mexican television) 'the most ambitious plan in the world', *el mejor surtido en México* 'the best range in Mexico' (advertisement).

(ii) Viene de Toledo normally only means 'he's coming from Toledo': *es de Toledo* = 'he's from Toledo'.

(d) 'Made of', 'consisting of':

una estatua de oro macizo  
un manuscrito de pergamino  
una novela de ciencia-ficción  
Tiene una voluntad de hierro  
Este yogur es de leche de oveja

a solid gold statue  
a parchment manuscript  
a science-fiction novel  
She has an iron will  
This is ewe's-milk yoghurt

(e) 'About' in the sense of 'concerning':

It is doubtful whether *de* often means 'concerning', except after certain verbs like *hablar*, *quejarse* *de*, *protestar*: *una carta de amor* 'a love letter' is very different from *una carta sobre el amor* 'a letter about love'.

No quiero hablar de mis problemas personales  
Esta noche va a hablar sobre problemas personales  
Es que yo quería hablar con usted de mi salario  
No hace más que quejarse de que tiene demasiado trabajo  
¿De qué va la cosa?

I don't want to talk about my personal problems  
Tonight he's talking on/about 'personal problems'  
Actually I wanted to talk to you about my wages  
All he does is moan about having too much work  
What's it all about?

### (f) 'Costing':

Las naranjas de mil pesos son las mejores  
Han comprado una casa de un millón de libras

The 1,000-peso oranges are the best  
They've bought a million-pound house

(g) Emotions arising from something:

Tengo miedo del agua  
el respeto de la los derechos humanos  
Me da pena de él  
Yo también experimenté la obsesión de por la forma literaria

I'm afraid of the water  
respect for human rights  
I'm sorry for him  
I also experienced the obsession for literary form

And, similarly, *el horror de la* *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', *admiration* 'admiration', *desprecio* 'contempt', *odio* 'hatred', etc.

Note also *le tengo miedo al agua*, *tengo miedo de/le tengo miedo a todo*. See 34.1.

(h) In certain adverbial phrases of manner:

Lo escribió de manera que nadie pudiera leerlo  
Me puse a pensar de qué modo podría ayudarlos  
Le ha venido de perlas  
Sólo/Solo he estado en Sevilla de paso  
Intentaron entrar de balde  
Sale todos los sábados de juerga  
Estucimos de bromas hasta las tres de la mañana

She wrote it in such a way that no one could read it  
I set about thinking how I could help them  
It suited him just right  
I've only been in Seville on the way to somewhere else  
They tried to get in free/without paying  
He goes out on the town every Saturday  
We were up until three telling jokes/larking about

(i) Condition (English 'as', 'in'):

This construction is closely related to the previous one:

De niña me gustaba mucho coser  
(M. Arraiz, Cuba, dialogue)  
Trabaja dos meses de camarero  
—¿De qué vas al baile? —De pastora  
Tú aquí estás de más  
Vi a una criada de blanco paseando al niño

As a child I really used to like sewing  
He worked as a waiter for two months  
'What are you going to the ball as?' 'As a shepherdess'  
You're not needed here  
I saw a maid in white taking the child for a walk

una chica joven de vaqueros y chaqueta de hombre (C. Martín Gaité, Spain)

a young girl in jeans and a man's jacket

### Note

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* (C. Martín Gaité, Spain) 'the sewing basket almost won't shut because it's so full', *no podía continuar de (lo) cansado que estaba* 'she couldn't carry on because she was so tired', *de puro ansioso, Javier había bostezado* (M. Benedetti, Uruguay) 'Javier was so anxious that he yawned'.

### (j) To mean 'if':

For *de* plus the infinitive used for *si* in the if-clause of a conditional sentence, see 25.8.3.

### (k) Age, measurements:

un hombre de cuarenta años

a man aged forty

un pun de tres días

a three-day-old loaf

Esta sogá tiene tres metros de largo

This rope is three metres long

En algunos puntos el mar tiene más de

In some places the sea is more than six

seis kilómetros de profundo

kilometres deep

(l) *De* is used in certain circumstances with adjectives before an infinitive. Compare *su conducta es difícil de comprender* 'his behaviour is difficult to understand', and *es difícil comprender su conducta* 'it's difficult to understand his behaviour'. See 18.10 for further examples and discussion.

(m) *De* is used after *más* and *menos* before numerals and quantities: *ha comprado más de tres kilos* 'he's bought more than three kilos', *los cojinetes necesitan menos de medio litro de aceite* 'the bearings need less than half a litre of oil'. See 5.5 for further discussion.

(n) *De* replaces *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 necesitas* 'don't use more than those you need'. See 5.6 for discussion.

(o) *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 excuses aren't to be believed

Su veracidad no es muy de recomendarse

One can't recommend its truth very much

(J. J. Arreola, Mexico, dialogue, para phrase)

is not used after *muy* in this kind of

Su habilidad no es de/para subestimar

His cleverness is not to be underestimated

(p) After certain verbs meaning 'to take by', 'seize by', 'pull on', etc.:

La cogió de la mano

He took her by the hand

Me tiraba de la manga

She was pulling on my sleeve

El profesor lo/le asió de una oreja

The teacher took him by an ear

(q) To denote the agent in some types of passive construction and to indicate the author of a work or the main actor in a film or play:

acompañado de su esposa

accompanied by his wife

... un viejo acompañado de un perro

an old man accompanied by a dog

un cuadro de Velázquez  
una película de Clark Gable

a painting by Velázquez  
a Clark Gable film

See 34.14 note (ii) for discussion of participle + *de*.

### (r) In certain set time phrases:

de día/de noche

by day/by night

Se levantó muy de mañana

He got up very early in the morning

(s) In constructions of the type *pobre de ti* 'poor you', *ese tonto de John* 'that fool John', etc.:

Tendrás que habértelas con el gendul de

You'll have to tackle that layabout so-and-so

Fulano

¿Sabes lo que ha hecho la pobre de su

Do you know what his poor wife has done?

mujer?

### (t) 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':

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

### 34.7.2 Deber or deber de?

The traditional and soundest rule is that *deber* implies obligation and *deber de* assumptions: *debes comer menos* 'you must eat less', *deben de ser las cinco* 'it must be five o'clock'. Unfortunately, modern colloquial Spanish tends to use *deber* for both meanings, with a consequent loss of clarity. See 21.3 for details.

### 34.7.3 De before *que*

Some verbs, all verbal phrases involving a noun or adjective, and some adverbial phrases, must 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 33.4.2 for discussion.

### 34.7.4 Dequeísmo

For the popular and spreading tendency to use *de que* instead of *que* after verbs of belief and communication, e.g. *¿dice de que no viene* for *dice que no viene* 'she says she isn't coming', see 33.4.3. This construction is vehemently repudiated by educated speakers everywhere.

### 34.7.5 Desde, and de with the meaning of 'from'

The existence of two Spanish words which both mean 'from' is a source of confusion; nor is the distinction always strictly observed by native speakers. *Desde* stresses the idea of movement or distance more than *de*. It is therefore appropriate when motion 'from' a place requires some unusual effort or when the point of origin is mentioned but not the destination, as in *os reo desde mi ventana* 'I can see you from my window'. It is also much used in time phrases to mean 'since'; see 32.3.7:

Desde aquí el camino es muy bueno  
Avanzó desde la puerta con un cuchillo  
en la mano  
He venido andando desde el centro: el  
metro está en huelga  
Y entonces una soga lo atrapó desde atrás  
(J. Cortázar, Argentina)  
Desde hoy/A partir de hoy tienen que  
llegar a tiempo  
Los tenemos desde cincuenta centavos  
hasta cinco pesos  
Desde siempre y que ella era perfecta  
(A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)

From here the road is very good  
(S)he moved forward from the door with a  
knife in his/her hand  
I've walked all the way from the centre: the  
Metro is on strike  
Then he was caught from behind by a rope  
From today you must arrive on time  
We have them from 50 centavos to 5 pesos  
I had always heard that she was perfect

## Notes

(i) If *a*, *hasta* or an adverb of place appears, *desde* is often interchangeable with *de*: *de/desde aquí* *hasta* *el centro* *las calles son muy estrechas* 'from here to the centre the roads are very narrow'; *de/desde aquí a la cima mide diez mil metros* 'from here to the summit it measures 10,000 metres'; *desde/de 1922 a 1942 estuvo en Colombia* 'from 1922 to 1942 I was in Colombia'.

If no such prepositional phrase of destination occurs *desde* is usually the safer option, though usage is fickle: *los 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 lleve vuelto a ver* 'since then I haven't seen him'.

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* 'he took three diamonds from the bag'; *pasó de secretaria a jefe en tres meses* 'she went from secretary to boss in three months'; *hizo un modelo de un trazo 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* 'he's come from Spain to live in England'; *sólo/solo la veo de Pascuas a Ramos* 'I only see her once in a blue moon' (lit. 'from Easter to Palm Sunday').

(ii) *Desde* *ya* is commonly found in the River Plate region (and increasingly in Spain, according to Manuel Seco) with the meaning of 'right away': *Desde luego* means 'of course' on both continents.

## 34.8 Durante

This word, which means 'during', 'for ...', a period of time, and other ways of saying 'for a period of time', is discussed at 32.2 and 32.3.4.

## 34.9 En

As a preposition of place *en* is disconcertingly vague since it combines the meanings of 'in' and 'on' (French *sur* and *dans*), as well as 'at', 'into', 'onto': *en la caja* 'in the box'; *en la mesa* 'on/at the table'; *está en la comisaría* 'he's in/at the police station'; Spanish-speaking learners of English have problems in differentiating 'in', 'on' and 'at'. For the relationship between *en* and 'at' in sentences like 'at the station', 'at Cambridge', see 34.1d.

When it means 'on a horizontal surface', it alternates with *sobre* (see 34.17) and also sometimes with *encima de* 'on top of'. Thus one can say *en/sobre/encima de la mesa* 'on the table', but *mi hijo duerme en mi cama* 'my son sleeps in my bed', since

## (a) As an equivalent of 'in', 'on' or 'at':

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Tus camisas están en el cajón</i><br><i>Cuelga el cuadro en la pared</i><br><i>Dio unos golpes discretos en la puerta</i><br><i>La llave está en la puerta</i><br><i>Gasto mucho dinero en juegos de azar</i><br><i>... sentado a/en una mesa</i> (see note i)<br><i>El agua ha penetrado en las vigas</i><br><i>Uno de mis pendientes se me ha caído en el agua</i> (see note ii)<br><i>La bruja lo lle transformó en rana</i><br><i>Propusieron convertirlo en sanatorio en otoño/primavera/1924</i><br><i>¿Todavía está en proyecto?</i><br><i>Te da ciento y raya en latín</i> | <i>Your shirts are in the drawer</i><br><i>Hang the picture on the wall</i><br><i>He tapped discreetly on the door</i><br><i>The key's in the door</i><br><i>I spend a lot of money on gambling (lit. games of chance)</i><br><i>... sitting at a table</i><br><i>The water has soaked into the joists</i><br><i>One of my earrings fell off in the water</i> (note translation)<br><i>The witch turned him into a frog</i><br><i>They suggested turning it into a sanatorium in autumn/spring/1924</i><br><i>It's still at the planning stage</i><br><i>He's miles better than you in Latin</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## Notes

(i) Compare *se sentó a la mesa* 'he sat down at table' with *siempre se comporta mal en la mesa* 'he always misbehaves at table'. See 34.1d for discussion.

(ii) The example with the earrings suggests the wearer was already in the water, e.g. swimming. If trajectory down to the water is meant, *a* is more usual: *se tiró al río* 'he jumped into the river'; *el avión cayó al mar* 'the plane fell into the sea'. *A* is the preposition of choice after verbs of motion: *llegaron a Madrid* 'they arrived in Madrid'.

(iii) *Entrar* and similar verbs take *en* (often *a* in Latin America, and occasionally in Spain): *entró en el cuarto* 'he entered the room'.

## (b) To express the thing by or at which something else is judged or estimated:

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Los daños se han calculado en diez millones de dólares</i><br><i>El tipo oficial quedó fijado en 151.93 por dólar (El País)</i><br><i>Lo vendieron en/por un millón de pesetas</i><br><i>Te tenía en más</i><br><i>El progreso logrado en esta investigación es computable en cero</i><br><i>Me lo presupusieron en cien mil</i><br><i>Se nota que es inglés en su manera de hablar</i><br><i>Lo/Le conocí en el andar</i> | <i>The damage has been calculated at ten million dollars</i><br><i>The official rate was fixed at 151.93 to the dollar</i><br><i>They sold it for a million pesetas</i><br><i>I thought more highly of you</i><br><i>The progress achieved in this investigation can be reckoned as zero</i><br><i>They gave me an estimate of 100,000 for it</i><br><i>One can tell he's English by the way he talks</i><br><i>I recognized him from the way he walked</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## (c) In a number of adverbial phrases:

|                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Lo tomaron en serio</i><br><i>en mangas de camisa/en cueros/en bromas/en balle</i><br><i>en fila/en seguida (or enseguida)</i><br><i>Estoy en contra</i> | <i>They took it/him seriously in shirtsleeves/naked/as a joke/pointlessly in a row/straight away</i><br><i>I'm against</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## (d) To mean 'as':

Como is much more usual nowadays in the following sentences:

|                                                                                                |                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Hablar de esa manera, en/como ser superior, es absurdo</i><br><i>Os hablo en/como verbi</i> | <i>To talk like that, as a superior being, is absurd</i><br><i>I'm talking to you as an aviator</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

- (e) After a number of common verbs, and in several miscellaneous constructions:

|                                                   |                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <i>Pensé mucho en usted</i>                       | I thought of you a lot                    |
| <i>Quedamos en vernos a las siete</i>             | We agreed to meet at seven                |
| <i>Tardaron cinco semanas en reparar el coche</i> | They took five weeks to mend the car      |
| <i>Vaciló en contestarme</i>                      | He hesitated before answering me          |
| <i>No dudó en devolvermelo</i>                    | She didn't hesitate to give it back to me |
| <i>No ayuda en nada</i>                           | (S)he's/It's no help at all               |
| <i>La reina abdicó en su hijo</i>                 | The queen abdicated in favour of her son  |
| <i>Se interesa mucho en/por la filatelia</i>      | She's very interested in stamp collecting |
| <i>El fue el primero/último en hacerlo</i>        | He was the first/last to do it            |
| <i>hablar en inglés</i>                           | to speak in English                       |

### Notes

- (i) See 18.2 for further remarks about prepositional usage with verbs. For the obsolete construction *en + gerund* see 20.5.  
 (ii) *En la mañana* may be used in Latin America for *por la mañana*: en las mañanas salíamos a montar a caballo (A. Mastroretta, Mexico) 'in the mornings we used to go riding'.

### 34.10 Entre

Both 'between' and 'among'. *Entre* also has a number of uses unfamiliar to English speakers.

Prepositional pronoun forms are not nowadays 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 tú*). But the prepositional form *si*, from *se*, is used after *entre*. See section (c) below.

- (a) 'Between':

|                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Estábamos entre la espada y la pared</i>                                                | We were between the sword and the wall<br>(i.e. 'we had our backs to the wall'/'we were between the Devil and the deep blue sea') |
| <i>... constantemente entre la excitación y la depresión</i> (M. Vázquez Montalbán, Spain) | ... constantly between excitement and depression                                                                                  |
| <i>Cuestion entre mil y dos mil entre tú/usted y yo ...</i>                                | They cost between one and two thousand between you and me ...                                                                     |
| <i>Entre todos rehuidéremos Madrid</i> (poster)                                            | Working together we'll modernize Madrid                                                                                           |
| <i>Lo terminaron entre María y su hermana</i>                                              | Maria and her sister finished it between them                                                                                     |

### Note

The last example is typical of a construction unfamiliar to English speakers: *llenar el pantano entre cuatro ríos* (from Moliner (1998), I, 1146) 'four rivers combine to fill the reservoir'; *trozos de una novela rosa que fuimos escribiendo entre las dos* (C. Martín Gaité, Spain) 'bits of a romantic novel the two of us were writing together'.

- (b) 'Among':

It is used with a wider range of nouns than its English equivalent, e.g. *entre*

|                                                                                                      |                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>No pude encontrar el libro entre tantos tomos</i>                                                 | I couldn't find the book among so many volumes                                |
| <i>Vivió diez años entre los beduinos de Arabia</i>                                                  | He lived for ten years among the Bedouins of Arabia                           |
| <i>La perdí de vista entre la muchedumbre</i>                                                        | I lost sight of her in the crowd                                              |
| <i>No podía decidir entre tantas posibilidades</i>                                                   | I couldn't choose among so many possibilities                                 |
| <i>... y entre el ruido de la lluvia se escuchaba el ladrido de los perros</i> (L. Sepúlveda, Chile) | ... and through/above the noise of the rain the barking of the dogs was heard |
| <i>Entre la niebla se percibía una masa inquieta</i> (L. Mateo Díez, Spain)                          | A restless mass/shape could be seen in the fog                                |

- (c) 'Among themselves', 'one from the other':

In the second of these two meanings *entre* is used in a way unfamiliar to English speakers. It is especially liable to appear with the pronoun *si* (discussed in detail at 11.5.3):

|                                                                                                                                      |                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>En casa hablan castellano entre si</i> (or <i>entre ellos</i> )                                                                   | At home they speak Spanish among themselves                                 |
| <i>Es más fácil que dos personas vivan en armonía cuando se respetan entre si</i>                                                    | It's easier for two people to live in harmony when they respect one another |
| <i>Los idiomas que se hablan en la India son muy diferentes entre si</i>                                                             | The languages spoken in India differ widely one from another                |
| <i>Enseguida notamos el recelo manifiesto que se dispensan entre si</i> (E. Lynch, Argentina: one can also write <i>en seguida</i> ) | We immediately noticed the obvious distrust they felt for one another       |

- (d) It can translate the English phrase 'what with':

|                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Entre los niños y el ruido que hacen los albañiles, me estoy volviendo loco</i>                               | What with the children and the noise the builders make, I'm going mad                                                                                              |
| <i>Entre el problema de la inflación y la deuda exterior este país va cuesta abajo entre pilos y flautas ...</i> | What with the problem of inflation and the foreign debt, this country is going downhill what with one thing and another ... (lit. 'what with whistles and flutes') |

- (e) In certain phrases, in a way strange to English speakers:

|                                                    |                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Van como ovejas al matadero, decía entre si</i> | They're going like lambs to the slaughter, he said to himself |
| <i>Decía entre mí ...</i>                          | I said to myself ...                                          |
| <i>El museo está abierto entre semana</i>          | The museum is open on weekdays and Saturdays                  |

### 34.11 Hacia

- (a) A close equivalent of 'towards', but rather wider in application since it also translates the English suffix *-wards/-wards*:

|                                                                |                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <i>El satélite viaja hacia Venus</i>                           | The satellite is travelling towards Venus        |
| <i>La muchedumbre se dirigía hacia el palacio presidencial</i> | The crowd was making for the presidential palace |
| <i>Señaló hacia el este</i>                                    | He pointed to the east                           |
| <i>Hacia el oeste no había más que dunas</i>                   | Towards the west there was nothing but           |

La actitud de la ONU hacia tales problemas parece ambigua  
El incidente ocurrió hacia las tres de la tarde  
El coche rodaba hacia atrás  
Se apoyaba hacia delante en un bastón

The attitude of the UN towards such problems seems ambiguous  
The incident occurred towards three in the afternoon  
The car was rolling backwards  
He was leaning forwards on a stick

In time phrases *hacia* can less commonly be replaced by *sobre* – *sobre finales de agosto* 'around the end of August', *sobre las tres de la tarde*, 'around 3 p.m.' – or, with dates, by *para*: *para octubre* 'towards/around October'.

(b) Emotions, attitudes 'towards':

*Por*, *con* and *para* can be 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* see 34.5b.

*mi profundo amor hacia/por/a todo lo andaluz*  
*Mostraba una indiferencia total hacia/por los críticos*  
*la simpatía de los insurgentes hacia/por el modelo cubano*

my deep love for everything Andalusian  
He displayed total indifference towards criticisms  
the insurgents' sympathy for the Cuban model

### 34.12 Hasta

(a) 'As far as', 'until', 'up to':

*hasta ahora*  
*Llegaron hasta el oasis, pero tuvieron que volverse*  
*No nos vamos hasta el día trece*  
*Siguió leyendo hasta que no había luz*  
*Bailaron hasta no poder más*  
*Estoy de exámenes hasta la coronilla*  
(or *hasta las narices*)  
*hasta luego*

until now/up to now  
They got as far as the oasis, but had to turn back  
We're not leaving until the thirteenth  
She kept reading until there was no light  
They danced until they were exhausted  
I've had enough of exams (I'm sick to death of exams)  
goodbye/au revoir

(b) *Hasta que* no:

See 23.2.4d for this construction.

(c) As an equivalent of *incluso* 'even':

*Hasta llegó a ofrecerles dinero*  
*Hasta en Inglaterra hace calor a veces*

He even went as far as offering them money  
Even in England it's hot sometimes

#### Note

In Mexico, and in neighbouring countries, *hasta* has acquired the meaning of 'not until': *perdona que te llame hasta ahora* (C. Fuentes, 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'.

### 34.13 Mediante

A close equivalent of 'by means of' some instrument, argument or device:

*Es inútil intentar abolir el abuso de alcohol mediante/por decreto/con decretos*  
It is useless to try to abolish alcohol abuse by decree

### 34.14 Para and por

#### 34.14.1 The difference between them

The existence of two prepositions which both sometimes seem to mean 'for', French *pour*, is one of the stumbling blocks of the language. Although the difference is best learnt from examples, one basic distinction is that *para* expresses purpose or destination and *por* cause or motive, a difference clearly visible in 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 because of you/on your behalf'. English speakers are usually confused by sentences like 'this fence is for the rabbits': since this obviously means 'because of the rabbits' rather than something given to them, one must say *esta valla es por los conejos*. The Spanish Civil Guards' motto *Todo por la Patria* 'Everything for the Home Country' exemplifies *por* at its most confusing. It means 'everything (we do is done) for our country', i.e. 'all our actions are inspired by our country', whereas *Todo para la Patria* would mean 'everything (we have is) for our country', i.e. 'we give all our belongings to our country'. It is useful to recall that if 'for' can be replaced by 'out of' or 'because' then *por* may be the correct translation, but not *para*: *lo hizo por amor* 'he did it for (out of) love', *lo hago por el dinero* 'I do it for (because of) the money'.

*Llevo el abrigo por/la causa de mi madre*  
I'm wearing this coat because of my mother (she'll be cross/worried if I don't)

*Llevo este abrigo para/la mi madre*  
I'm taking this coat for my mother (i.e. to give to her)

*Han venido por ti*  
They've come to get you/come because of you/come instead of you

*Han venido estos paquetes para ti*  
These parcels have come for you

*Lo has conseguido por mí*  
You've got it as a result of me (i.e. I helped you)

*Los has conseguido para mí*  
You've got it for me

Particularly troublesome is the fact that *por* and *para* can be almost identical in meaning in some sentences that state an intention: *ha venido por/para estar contigo* '(s)he's come to be with you', whereas in others only *para* is possible: *el carpintero ha venido para reparar la puerta*, 'the carpenter's come to mend the door'. This problem is discussed at 34.14.7.

#### Note

The form *pa* is substandard for *para* and should be avoided. It is accepted in a few humorous familiar expressions used in Spain (and possibly elsewhere), e.g. *es muy echo p' delante* 'he's very forward', *estoy p'al arrastre* 'I'm all in/exhausted', *p'al gato* 'worthless' (literally 'for the cat').

#### 34.14.2 Uses of para

*Para* is used:

(a) To indicate purpose, object or destination, e.g. *¿para quién es esto?* 'who(m) is this for?', *¿para qué es esto?* 'what's this for?', *trabaja para ganar dinero* 'he works to earn money', etc. (but see 34.14.7 for the possible alternative use of *por* in some contexts):

Se preparó para salir  
Lo hace para/ con el fin de/ por llamar  
la atención  
Un coche hecho para durar  
(advertisement, Spain)  
Estudia para médico  
Para manzanas, Asturias

He got ready to jump  
She does it to attract attention  
A car made to last  
(S)he's studying to become a doctor  
For good apples - Asturias (i.e. if you want  
good apples go to Asturias)

## Notes

- (i) Para can also express ironic purpose, like the English 'only to': *se abstuvo durante años de fumar y beber, para luego morir en un accidente de coche* 'he refrained for years from smoking and drinking, only to die in a car accident'; *corrió a casa para encontrarse con que ya se habían marchado* 'she hurried home only to find that they'd already left'.  
(ii) The following construction may also be thought of as expressing the object or purpose of something: *sus historias no son para/ de creer* 'his stories aren't to be believed' (lit. 'aren't for believing'), *no es para tanto* 'it's not that serious/it doesn't call for that much fuss'.  
(iii) For the difference between *¿por qué?* and *¿para qué?* 'what for?', see 24.10.

## (b) Direction after verbs of motion:

Íbamos para casa cuando empezó a llover  
La secretaria ya ha salido para Burgos  
Ya va para viejo  
Va para ministro

We were on the way home when it started raining.  
The secretary has already left for Burgos  
(S)he's getting old now  
He's on the way to becoming a minister

## (c) To indicate advantage, disadvantage, usefulness, need:

Fumar es malo para la salud  
La paciencia es un requisito indispensable para los profesores  
Con esto tenemos para todos  
Tú eres para él lo más importante

Smoking is bad for the health  
Patience is an indispensable requirement for teachers  
With this we've enough for everybody  
You're the most important thing to/ for him

## (d) Reaction, response, mood:

Para mí eso no es justo  
Esto para mí huele a vinagre/Esto a mí me huele a vinagre  
Yo no tengo amigos. Para mí, que mi mujer me espanta  
Para su padre es un genio

That doesn't seem fair to me  
This smells of vinegar to me  
I haven't got any friends. If you ask me, my wife scares them away  
(S)he's a genius in his/her father's eyes

## Notes

- (i) For para con in sentences like *es muy atento para con los invitados* 'he's very courteous towards guests', see 34.3b.  
(ii) Para can also translate 'not in the mood for': *no estoy para bromas* 'I'm not in the mood for jokes'.  
(e) To translate 'for' when it means 'considering', 'in view of':  
*Está muy alto para su edad*  
*Estás muy viejo para esos trotes*  
*Es poco dinero para tanto trabajo*  
(f) 'To' in certain reflexive expressions:

Esto acabará mal, me decía para mí/entre mí  
Murmuraba para/entre sí  
(g) 'About' in the meaning of 'on the point of':  
Ya deben estar para/ al llegar  
La leche está para cocer  
Pues yo estoy para cumplir treinta y cinco la semana que viene (E. Arenas, Spain, dialogue)

This will end badly, I said to myself  
(S)he was muttering to himself/herself  
They must be about to arrive  
The milk's about to boil  
Well, I'm going to be thirty-five next week

## Note

In Latin America *estar por* is used: *está por llover* 'it's about to rain', en 1942, cuando volvió definitivamente, estaba por cumplir veinte años (S. Pitol, Mexico) 'in 1942, when he came back for good, he was on the verge of his twentieth birthday', oye bien. Un pájaro está por cantar (J. L. Borges, Argentina) 'listen. A bird is about to sing'. In Spain *estar por* means to be in favour of 'to be thinking about doing something'.

## 34.14.3 Para in time phrases

## (a) To translate 'by':

Lo tendré preparado para las cinco  
Para entonces ya estaremos todos muertos  
Si ensayamos fuerte durante todo el año, para el verano estaremos en condiciones de actuar (S. Puértolas, Spain, dialogue)

I'll have it ready by/for five o'clock  
We'll all be dead by then  
If we rehearse hard all year we'll be in a condition to perform by Summer

## (b) 'For':

Para sometimes expresses the idea of 'for n days/weeks/years'. See 32.3.6 for further discussion.

## (c) 'Around', 'towards':

El embalse estará terminado para finales de noviembre  
Volveremos para agosto

The dam will be finished around the end of November  
We'll return around August

## Notes

- (i) In the last example para is more precise than *hacia* and *por* and less precise than *en*.  
(ii) 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'.  
(d) 'Not enough to', 'considering how much':  
*No había tomado suficientes pastillas como para matarse* (M. Vázquez Montalbán, Spain)  
... un matrimonio rápido, bastante rápido para lo mucho que siempre se dice que hay que pensárselo (J. Marías, Spain)

## 34.14.4 Main uses of por

No pudimos salir por la causa de la nieve  
el índice de muertes por la causa de  
infecciones pulmonares

Lo hice por dinero  
la razón por la que me voy  
muchas gracias por el regalo  
Me pusieron una multa por aparcar en  
el centro

Te ha pisado por tanto  
Las críticas de la izquierda vienen por la  
causa de tres temas  
El profesor la calificó con un cero por no  
saber la lección (M. Puig, Argentina)  
Las empresas norteamericanas sufren un  
descalabro importante por la situación  
actual del mercado (Abc, Spain)

Por may thus indicate the origin or inspiration of an emotion or mental state:

No lo he podido ver por lo enojado que es  
conceitedness  
Me fastidió por lo mal que cantas  
Lo he odio por su mal genio  
Nuestro amor por/hacia los nuestros hijos  
su fascinación por los Estados Unidos  
Siento una enorme curiosidad por saber  
si esta fiesta es la única vida  
Tengo un recuerdo nostálgico por el  
Londres de su juventud  
No por previsible la foto anual dejaba de  
ser un acontecimiento excepcional  
(E. Lynch, Argentina)

Note the idiom, common to Spain and Latin America, *darle a uno por* 'to take up', 'to get keen on', e.g. *no, a Carlos no le interesan estas cosas; le ha dado por el arte* (L. Otero, Cuba, dialogue) 'no, Carlos isn't interested in those things. He's taken up art/He's developed a passion for art.'

(b) *Por* = 'by' in passive constructions:

Sus novelas fueron dogiadas por los  
críticos  
La catedral fue diseñada por Gaudí  
Los campos estaban devastados por la  
sequía  
El suelo estaba cubierto por/de un lecho  
de hierba  
Sociedad y economía aztecas por  
M. León-Portilla

## Notes

- (i) For 'de meaning 'by' to indicate the author of a work or the main actor in a film or play see 34.7 la.  
(ii) De is not nowadays used in passive sentences to mean 'by', except with certain verbs which are best learnt separately. Where there is a possibility of using either *por* or *de*, the former usually implies an active agent and the latter generally implies a state. *De* is therefore common when

tempted by the Devil', *Maria dijo algunas palabras en voz muy baja ... seguidas de un ruido de sillas* (E. Sabato, Argentina) 'Maria said a few words in a very low voice, followed by a sound of chairs', en todas partes era seguido por una muchedumbre de admiradores (le seguía una muchedumbre is more natural) he was followed everywhere by a crowd of admirers', el formulario debe estar 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', en verano las vacas están acormentadas por las moscas 'in summer the cows are tormented by flies'.

(c) *Runs on*, 'works by', 'by means of':

El sistema de alarma funciona por rayos infrarrojos The alarm system works by infra-red rays  
El tratamiento por/con rayos X ha producido resultados animadores Treatment by X-rays has produced encouraging results  
un coche que marcha por/con la gas-oil a car which runs on diesel oil  
Se puede pagar por/con cheque bancario Payment by cheque/(US 'check') accepted  
[el Buda] enseñaba la aniquilación del dolor por la aniquilación del deseo [The Buddha] taught the extinction of suffering by the extinction of desire  
(J. L. Borges, Argentina)

(d) *In support of*, 'in favour of', 'on behalf of':

Yo voté por que tu libro fuera premiado I voted in favour of your book getting the prize  
(R. Arenas, Cuba)  
¿Estás tú por la violencia? Do you support violence?  
Encuentro de Escritores por la Paz Conference of Writers for Peace (i.e. who support peace)

(e) *Exchange for*, substitute for, distribution per:

Llévelo al departamento de reclamaciones Take it to the complaints department and y se lo cambiarán por uno nuevo they'll change it for a new one  
Ahora daría lo que no tengo por otra Now I'd give everything I haven't got (for the chance) to hear her (voice)  
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  
El dará la clase por mí He'll give the class instead of me  
Cones por tres You eat enough for three  
tres raciones por persona three helpings 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 Two per cent are Protestants  
protestantes

(f) Prices, amounts of money:

un cheque por/cien dólares a cheque/(US 'check') for 100 dollars  
Compró una casa por un millón de dólares He bought a house for one million dollars

## Note

*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 libras por este ordenador (Lat. Am. por esta computadora) 'I paid £1,000 for this computer', he pagado mucho por él 'I paid a lot for it', but *yo lo pagué la semana pasada* 'I paid

## (g) 'To judge by':

- ... por las señas que me ha dado. ...  
 por lo que tú dices ...  
 por lo visto  
 Evidentemente, por su voz, por su aspecto,  
 por su ropa era una persona decente  
 (G. Cabrera Infante, Cuba)

## (h) 'In search of':

Peninsular speech prefers *a por*, a construction grudgingly admitted by grammarians and rejected by Latin Americans:

- Ha ido (a) por agua  
 Lo/Le enviaron (a) por el médico  
 Voy al baño a por Kleenex (C. Rico-Godoy,  
 Spain; Lat. Am. por Kleenex)  
 Fui por mi abrigo (A. Mastretta, Mexico)  
 I went for my coat/I went to get my coat

## (i) 'Through' (= 'by means of'):

- Conseguí el empleo por/la través de mi tío  
 Me enteré por un amigo  
 I got the job through my uncle  
 I found out through/from a friend

## (j) Por in adverbial phrases of manner:

- una campaña por/en pro de la libertad de la prensa  
 Él es senador por Massachusetts  
 Aprendió a tocar el piano por sí misma/ella sola  
 por corrección/mar (but en tren,  
 en coche, en bicicleta, a pie)  
 Los denunció por igual  
 por lo general/generalmente  
 por lo corriente/corrientemente  
 Me lo tendrías que decir por las buenas o por las malas  
 a campaign for freedom of the press  
 He's senator for Massachusetts  
 She learnt to play the piano by herself  
 by mail/air/sea  
 I denounce both/all sides equally  
 generally usually  
 You'll have to tell me one way or another

## (k) 'However ...' in concessions (see 16.13.2):

- Por más inteligente que seas, no lo vas a resolver  
 Era la verdad por dura que me pareciera  
 (M. Torres, Spain)  
 Por mucho que protestes, te quedas aquí  
 However intelligent you may be, you won't solve it  
 It was the truth however hard it seemed to me  
 However much you protest, you're staying here

## (l) Miscellaneous examples:

- Por mí haz lo que quieras  
 ¿Por quién pregunta?  
 Es agrimensor, o algo por el estilo  
 Siéntese por Dios (not brusque, i.e.  
 not 'sit down for God's sake!')  
 Cinco por tres son quince  
 Mide 7 por 5  
 As far as I'm concerned, do what you like  
 Who are you asking for?  
 He's a surveyor, or something like that  
 Do please sit down  
 5 times 3 equals 15  
 It measures 7 by 5

## (m) With numerous verbs, e.g.:

- afanarse por to strive to  
 apurarse por to get anxious about  
 asustarse por to get frightened about  
 decidirse por to decide on  
 desolarse por to be very concerned about  
 disculparse por to apologize for  
 interesarse por to be interested in  
 jurar por swear by/on  
 luchar por to struggle to  
 molestarse por to bother about  
 optar por to opt for  
 preguntar por to ask about/after  
 preocuparse por to worry about  
 tomar por to take for  
 votar por to vote for

*Sapurarse* means 'to hurry' in Latin America.

## 34.14.5 Por in time phrases

(a) Por = 'in', but less precise than *en* where the latter is also possible:

- Debó ser por mayo  
 por aquellos días  
 It must have been some time in May  
 in those days/during those days

For 'just for', 'only for' and a more detailed discussion of *por* in time phrases see 32.3.5.

## Note

Latin Americans sometimes use *por* where Spaniards would use *durante*. See 32.3.5, note (ii).

## 34.14.6 Por as a preposition of place

## (a) 'All over', 'throughout':

- He viajado por Latinoamérica  
 Había muchos libros desparrramados por el suelo  
 Oye, ¿me das crema por/en la espalda?  
 I've travelled around Latin America  
 There were many books scattered over the floor  
 Could you please put cream on my back?

(b) 'In': less precise than *en* and often implying motion:

- La vi por/en la calle  
 Creo que las mujeres andan por Europa  
 (M. Benedetti, Uruguay, dialogue)  
 Debe estar por el jardín  
 Yo no sabía por dónde empezar  
 (M. Torres, Spain)  
 I saw her in the street  
 I think the women are somewhere in Europe  
 it must be somewhere in the garden  
 I didn't know where to begin

## (c) 'Up to':

- El agua le llegaba por la cintura  
 Me llegas por los hombros  
 The water was up to his waist  
 You reach my shoulders (e.g. to a growing child)

## (d) 'Through', 'out of', 'down':

- Se tiró por la ventana  
 Entró por la puerta  
 Se cayó por la escalera  
 Salía agua por el/del grifo  
 El tren pasó por/la través del túnel  
 He threw himself out of the window  
 He came through the door  
 He fell down the stairs  
 Water was coming out of the tap  
 The train went through the tunnel

por allí  
por delante  
por detrás  
por entre  
por Madrid

that way/around there  
in front  
from behind/behind  
in between  
through/via Madrid

### 34.14.7 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?  
¿Por qué has venido?  
Estoy aquí para/por verte  
... todo cuanto ella hacía por hacerlo  
feliz (G. García Márquez, Colombia;  
or para)  
... el esfuerzo por conservarse bien y por  
vestirse como una ramp de película de  
Hollywood revival de los años 50 (M.  
Vázquez Montalbán, Spain; or para)

What have you come for?  
Why have you come?  
I've come to see him  
... everything she did to make him happy  
... the effort to look after herself and to  
dress like a revival 1950s Hollywood film  
vamp

A useful rule seems to be: if the 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; i.e. *por* refers to the mental state of the subject, *para* to the goal of his/her action.

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 also be used). But *\*el fontanero ha venido por reparar el grifo* is as absurd as 'the plumber has come out of an urge to mend the tap'. Another example may clarify the point: *—¿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 contigo* 'Why am I going out to dinner with you?' 'To be with me.'

Estuve toda la noche sin dormir por/para  
no perderme el eclipse  
Llegó a las cinco de la mañana por/para  
cogerlos en la cama  
Ella le habría venido el alma al Diabolo  
por casarse con él (G. García Márquez  
Colombia)  
Dame una aspirina para calmar el dolor  
Incluso contrataron a un detective privado  
para buscarle/buscarlo  
Le prometí que haré lo posible por dar con  
él (A. Mastretta, Mexico, dialogue)

I spent the whole night without sleeping so  
as not to miss the eclipse  
(She arrived at five in the morning so as to  
catch them in bed  
She'd have sold her soul to the Devil to  
marry him  
Give me an aspirin to ease the pain  
They even hired a private detective to look  
for him  
I promise you I'll do everything possible to  
find him

### Note

After some words *por* is required: *teníamos prisa por verla* 'we were in a hurry to see her', *me esforzaba por/para llegar a tiempo* 'I used to make an effort to arrive on time', *el celo por la reforma* 'eagerness for reform', *el anhelo por la gloria* 'longing for glory'.

### 34.14.8 Some vital differences between *por* and *para*

Tengo muchas cosas por/sin hacer  
Tengo muchas cosas para hacer  
Estoy por hacerlo  
Estoy (aquí) para hacerlo  
Estaba para hacerlo (Lat. Am. por)  
Está por/sin acabar  
Está para acabar  
Está para (Lat. Am. por) acabar de un  
momento a otro

I have a lot of things still to do  
I have many things to do  
I feel inclined to do it  
I'm here in order to do it  
I was about to do it  
It isn't finished yet  
This has to be finished  
(S)he/it's about to finish at any moment

### 34.14.9 'For' not translated by *por* or *para*

la razón de mi queja  
Bebió porque no tenía otra cosa que hacer  
Los días eran cortos pues era ahora  
noviembre (see 33.5.3)  
el deseo de fama  
Lloró de alegría  
Es una buena secretaria a pesar de lo  
que gruñe  
No dijo una palabra durante dos horas  
No loñe he visto desde hace meses  
Llenamos tres semanas sin que recojan  
la basura  
Estudiamos horas esperando  
Se podía ver muy lejos  
ir a dar un paseo  
irse de vacaciones  
Me voy a Madrid unos días

the reason for my complaining  
She drank for want of something else to do  
The days were short, for it was now  
November  
the desire for fame  
She wept for joy  
She's a good secretary, for all her grumbling  
He didn't say a word for two hours  
I haven't seen him for months  
They haven't collected our rubbish/(US  
'trash') for three weeks  
We waited for hours  
You could see for miles  
to go for a walk  
to go for a holiday/vacation  
I'm going to Madrid for a few days

### 34.15 Según

'According to', 'depending on'. As with *entre*, a following pronoun appears in the subject form: *según tú* 'according to you', not *\*según ti*:

según el parte meteorológico  
Según tú, se debería abolir la televisión  
Irenas modificando el programa de  
estudios según el tipo de estudiante que  
se matricule  
Los precios varían según a qué dentista  
vayas (or según el dentista al que vayas)  
Me decidí luego, según cómo salgan  
las cosas

according to the weather report  
According to you, television should be  
abolished  
We'll modify the syllabus according to the  
type of student that signs on  
The prices vary according to which dentist  
you go to  
I'll decide later, depending on how things  
turn out

### Notes

(i) As the examples show, *según* often functions as an adverb: *—¿Vas tú también? —Según* 'Are you going too?' 'It depends', 'la policía detiene a los manifestantes según iban saliendo del edificio' 'the police were arresting the demonstrators as they came out of the building', *lo haremos según llegue papa* (en cuanto llegue is more usual) 'we'll do it as soon as father arrives', *según llegáramos al aparcamiento* ... un automóvil abandonaba un lugar grande y espacioso (C. Rico-Godoy, Spain) 'just as we were arriving at the parking lot a car was leaving a large and roomy parking space', *según dicen*

hacerlas (regional for ciertas cosas ...) 'there are certain kinds of things I don't like doing', the last example being typical of eastern Spain.

### 34.16 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: compare *dos Coca-Colas sin abrir* 'two Coca-Colas, unopened' (or 'not opened'). See 28.2.4.

|                                                          |                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| No subas al tren sin billete                             | Don't get on the train without a ticket                                                              |
| Como vuelva a verte por aquí te echo sin contemplaciones | If I see you around here again I'll throw you out on the spot (lit. 'without consideration for you') |
| Fumabas sin cesar                                        | You were smoking ceaselessly                                                                         |
| Estoy sin blanca                                         | I haven't got a penny                                                                                |
| ¡Cuántos hay sin comer!                                  | I how many there are who have nothing to eat!                                                        |
| Está más guapa sin peinar                                | She's more attractive without her hair done                                                          |

*Sin* can be used to create a new noun, e.g. *los sin hogar/los sin casa* 'the homeless'. *Sin* exists as a prefix in a few words, like *sinónimo* 'vast abundance', *sinrazón* 'insanity'/'absurdity', *sinvergüenza* 'shameless person'.

### 34.17 Sobre

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',/(British 'pitch').

|                                                                                                           |                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Querían edificar sobre estos terrenos un hotel nuevo                                                      | They wanted to build a new hotel on this land                                      |
| 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                                                      |
| Una mujer habla con un chico y un árbol agita unas hojas secas sobre sus cabezas (J. Cortázar, Argentina) | A woman is talking to a boy and a tree is waving a few dry leaves over their heads |
| Un sol de fuego caía sobre los campos                                                                     | A fiery sun fell on the plains                                                     |

#### Note

Compare *sobre, encima de* and *por encima de* in the following examples: *el rey está por encima de todos* 'the king is above everyone'; *mi jefe ciñeteo está encima de mí* 'my

*de/sobre la ciudad* (motion: *sobre* implies height and is often more literary than *encima de*) 'the plane flew over the city'.

(b) Approximation (more usually with *time*):

|                                                            |                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Llegaremos sobre las cinco de la tarde                     | We'll arrive around 5 p.m.    |
| Tenía sobre cuarenta años (... unos 40 años is more usual) | He was around forty years old |
| Costó sobre cien mil (unas/juas 100.000 ... is more usual) | It cost around 100,000        |

(c) 'About':

In this sense, *sobre* implies formal discourse 'about', i.e. 'on the subject of' something. Informal discourse usually requires *de*, cf. *no he venido a hablar de tus problemas* 'I haven't come to talk about your problems' (not *sobre*):

|                                                                               |                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pronunció una conferencia sobre los problemas del Oriente Próximo             | She delivered a lecture on the problems of the Near East                                       |
| La OMS advierte sobre el peligro del uso de tranquilizantes sin receta médica | The WHO (World Health Organization) warns of use of tranquilizers without medical prescription |

(d) Centre of rotation:

|                                                              |                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| El mundo gira sobre su eje polar                             | The world spins about its polar axis |
| Las puertas se abren sobre bisagras (from Luque Durán, 1973) | Doors turn on hinges                 |
| Dio media vuelta sobre el pie izquierdo (ibid.)              | He did a half-turn on his left foot  |

(e) Superiority or precedence 'over':

|                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| El triunfo de los conservadores sobre la izquierda                                                                            | The victory of the conservatives over the left                                                      |
| No tiene derecho a reclamar su superioridad sobre los demás                                                                   | He has no right to claim superiority over others                                                    |
| Sobre todo, quisiera agradecer a mi mujer ...                                                                                 | Above all, I would like to thank my wife ...                                                        |
| Y, sobre cualquier escúpulo, estaba mi hijo (A. Gala, Spain, dialogue)                                                        | And over and above any scruples there was my child (not 'son' here, since it was still in the womb) |
| El crecimiento, en términos reales, de las exportaciones en el primer mes de 1984 supera el 50% sobre enero de 1983 (El País) | In real terms, the growth in exports in the first month of 1984 is 50% higher than January 1983     |
| impuestos sobre la renta                                                                                                      | taxes on income                                                                                     |

### 34.18 Tras

'Behind', 'after'. It is a close equivalent of the more usual *detrás de* 'behind' (location) and *después de* 'after' (time). Its brevity makes it popular with journalists, but it is very rare in everyday speech. *Tras de* is an equally literary variant.

*Dos siluetas deformes se destacaron tras* Two distorted outlines loomed through/

¿Quién sabe qué cosas pasan tras las cortinas de aquella casa?  
 un generoso proyecto tras el cual se esconden intenciones menos altruistas  
 Me oculté tras el marco de la puerta  
 (G. Cabrera Infante, Cuba)

Una bandada de gaviotas venía tras el barco  
 Detrás de could be used in all the above examples.

Así, tras de los duros años de 1936 a 1939 ... (popular press; después de possible)

Los cazadores denuncian 'intereses políticos' tras las críticas de un grupo ecologista andaluz (El Mundo, Spain)  
 Tras de sus ojos se fue como imantado (M. de Unamuno, Spain)

### Notes

- (i) 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* (M. Pujig, Argentina, dialogue) '... a grant for the first year, which will be renewed for the second ... and so on, year after year', *han puesto un detective tras sus pasos* 'they've put a detective after him/on his trail'.  
 (ii) Note also the following construction: *tras de tener él la culpa, se enfada* (or *encina de tener él ...*) 'not only is it his fault, he has the nerve to get angry'.

## 34.19 Prepositional phrases

The following is a list of common prepositional phrases. They can appear before nouns and, if their meaning is appropriate, before pronouns and infinitives:

- a base de based on/consisting of  
 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 distinción de unlike  
 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/for want of  
 a favor de in favour of  
 a fin de with the aim of  
 a finales/fines de towards the end of  
 a flor de flush with/at ... level (used with piel 'skin', agua 'water', tierra 'ground')  
 a fuerza de by dint of
- a juicio de in the opinion of  
 a la sombra de in the shadow of  
 a más de as well as  
 a mediados de towards the middle of  
 a modo de in the manner of  
 al nivel de at the level of  
 a partir de starting from  
 a pesar de despite  
 a por see 34.14.4h  
 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

- además de as well as  
 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 'au fait with'/informed about  
 al estilo de in the style of  
 al frente de at the head/forefront of  
 al lado de next to  
 abajo de (Lat. Am. only) underneath; see 34.3 and 31.6.6  
 adentro de (Lat. Am. only) inside; see 31.6.5  
 afuera de (Lat. Am. only) outside; see 31.6.5  
 alrededor de around  
 atrás de (Lat. Am. only) behind; see 31.6.7  
 al tanto de = al corriente de  
 a la hora de at the moment of/when it comes to ...  
 a la vera de (literary) = al lado de  
 a lo largo de throughout/along  
 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 (an anniversary, etc.)  
 con objeto de with the object of  
 con relación a with respect of/in relation to  
 con respecto a with respect/reference to/in comparison to  
 con rumbo a in the direction of (i.e. moving towards)  
 con vistas a with a view to/bearing in mind  
 de acuerdo con in accordance with  
 de regreso a on returning to  
 debajo de see 34.3 and 31.6.6  
 delante de see 34.2, 31.6.8  
 dentro de see 31.6.5  
 después de after (time); see 14.10.3
- detrás de behind; see 34.18, 31.6.7  
 en atención a in consideration of  
 en base a on the basis of (i.e. sobre la base de)  
 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  
 enfrente de opposite  
 en honor de in honour of (but en honor a la verdad 'strictly speaking')  
 en lugar de instead of (+ noun or pronoun)  
 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 (+ infinitive) instead of ... -ing  
 en vías de on the way to: país en vías de desarrollo 'developing countries'  
 en vísperas de on the eve of  
 en vista de in view of  
 encima de see 34.9 and 34.17  
 fuera de see 31.6.5  
 lejos de far from  
 luego de (Lat. Am.) after; see 14.10.3  
 más allá de beyond  
 no obstante (literary) notwithstanding  
 por causa de = a causa de  
 por cuenta de = a mis/tus/sus/nuestras expensas at the expense of  
 por encima de over the head of/against the will of  
 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  
 so pretexto de (literary) on the pretext of  
 tras de see 34.18