

A New Reference Grammar of Modern *Spanish*

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

THIRD EDITION

McGraw-Hill

A Division of The McGraw-Hill Companies



Hundred Years of Solitude), *El otoño del patriarca* (*The Autumn of the Patriarch*), *El espía que surgió del frío* (*The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*), *Vida de Manuel Rosas* (*The Life of Manuel Rosas*), *La guerra de las galaxias* (*Star Wars*), etc.

However, the titles of newspapers and magazines are capitalized: *El País*, *La Nación*, *Ordenador Personal* (*Personal Computer*), etc.

(e) For points of the compass: *norte* 'North', *sur* 'South', *este* 'East', *oeste* 'West'. They are capitalized if they are part of a name: *América del Norte*, 'North America', etc.

39.4 Punctuation

These remarks refer only to major differences between Spanish and English. Readers who need a detailed account of Spanish punctuation should refer to specialized manuals.

39.4.1 Full stops/periods and commas

The full stop/(US 'period') (*el punto*) is used as in English, except that abbreviations are usually always written with a full stop:

English	Spanish
3000 ptas	3000 ptas.
Sr González	Sr. González

and a point is used in numbers where English uses a comma, and vice-versa: 1.567,50 = 1,567.50 and 1,005 (*uno coma cero cero cinco*) = 1.005 ('one point zero zero five'). However, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Central America use the system of Britain and the USA.

Commas (*la coma*) are used much as in English, except for writing decimals (see preceding paragraph). Commas are not written before the conjunction *y* in a series: *pumas, coyotes y monos* 'pumas, coyotes and monkeys'. Two clauses with different subjects are separated by a comma whereas in English the comma is nowadays often omitted: *Juan es uruguayo, y Marta es argentina* 'Juan is Uruguayan and Marta is Argentinian.'

39.4.2 Colons

Colons (*dos puntos*) are used as in English except that they appear after salutations in letters: *Muy Sr. mío:*⁵ 'Dear Sir,' *Querida Ana:* 'Dear Ana'.

39.4.3 Semi-colons

Semi-colons (*punto y coma*) are used much as in English, and they are much used after a series of commas instead of a comma to denote a longer pause:

<i>Tenía pan, huevos y vino; pero no tenía carne</i>	He had bread, eggs and wine, but he had no meat
<i>Miguel entró cansado, confuso; María le siguió, radiante y orgullosa.</i>	Miguel came in, tired, confused. Maria followed him, radiant and proud

The semi-colon is also regularly used before connectors, e.g. *sin embargo/no obstante* 'nevertheless', *a pesar de esto* 'despite this', that are themselves followed by a comma:

⁵ The formula used in the Southern Cone is *De mi consideración:*.

Le escribí más de una vez; sin embargo,
no me contestó

I wrote to him more than once. However,
he did not reply

39.4.4 Quotations and the representation of dialogue

There is no clear agreement over the use of *comillas* or inverted commas.

Chevrons (*comillas francesas* or *comillas angulares*, i.e. << >>) may be used (at least in Spain) like our inverted commas to indicate quotations or slang, dialect or other unusual forms, and occasionally to indicate dialogue within a paragraph:

Un inspector de bigotillo con acento <<pié noir>> acompañado de un gendarme de uniforme, va recorriendo las mesas pidiendo documentación: <<No pasa nada, es sólo una operación de rutina>>. Sin embargo, todo este impresionante montaje sorprende a todos. (Cambio16, Spain)

A further quotation within << >> is indicated by " ".

However, the *Libro de estilo* of *El País* (11.31) explicitly forbids the use of << >> and requires use of " " for quoted material and ' ' for quotations within quotations. This convention is used in many publications.

Single quotation marks are much used to enclose isolated words: *la palabra 'esnob' viene del inglés 'the word "snob" comes from English'*.

There are three types of dash in Spanish:

el guión	hyphen	short -
el signo de menos	minus sign	medium length -
la raya	dash	double length —

In the representation of continuous dialogue inverted commas are not used, the words spoken being introduced by a *raya*.

A *raya* marks either the beginning of dialogue, a change of speaker or a resumption of dialogue after an interruption: —*Ahora váyase*—*dijo*—*no vuelva más hasta que yo le avise*. Dialogue is closed by a *raya* only if unspoken words follow it, as in —*¿Qué tal estás?*—*Angustias lo dice con una sonrisa*.

Punctuation in direct speech is disconcertingly placed after the *raya*: —*Aprovecha ahora que eres joven para sufrir todo lo que puedas*—*le decía*—, *que estas cosas no duran toda la vida*. (G. García Márquez, *El amor en los tiempos del cólera*). Example:

—*¿Te parece que hablo de él con cierto rencor, con resentimiento?*—*Juanita hace un curioso mohín y veo que no pregunta por preguntar; es algo que debe preocuparla hace mucho tiempo.*

—*No noté nada de eso*—*le digo*—. *He notado, sí, que evitas llamar a Mayta por su nombre. Siempre das un rodeo en vez de decir Mayta. ¿Es por lo de Jauja, porque estás segura que fue él quien empujó a Vallejos?*—*No estoy segura*—*niega Juanita*—. *Es posible que mi hermano tuviera también su parte de responsabilidad. Pero pese a que no quiero, me doy cuenta que le guardo un poco de rencor. No por lo de Jauja. Porque lo hizo dudar. Esa última vez que estuvimos juntos le pregunté: <<Te vas a volver un ateo como tu amigo Mayta, también te va a dar por eso?>> No me respondió lo que yo esperaba. Encogió los hombros y dijo:*

—*A lo mejor, hermana, porque la revolución es lo primero.*

(M. Vargas Llosa, *Historia de Mayta*, Seix Barral. Printed in Spain)