

Morphological Pattern of the Regular Spanish Verb

(mainly based on Bull, Chapter 9)

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1. Simplex Forms	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3							
Infinitive	A	a	r	E	e	r	I	i	r							
Perfect Participle	A	a	do	E	i	do	I	i	do							
Imperfect Participle	A	a	ndo	E	ie	ndo	I	ie	ndo							
Present Indicative	A	a	mos ²	E	e	mos	I	i	mos							
Subjunctive	A	a	mos	E	a	mos	I	a	mos							
Imperfect Indicative	A	aba	mos	E	fa	mos	I	fa	mos							
Subjunctive	A	ara	mos	E	iera	mos	I	iera	mos							
2. Complex Forms	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6				
Pres. Perf. Ind.	h	e	mos	A	a	do	h	e	mos	E	i	do				
Subj.	haya	mos	A	a	do	haya	mos	A	a	do	haya	mos	E	i	do	
Pluperf. Indicative	había	mos	A	a	do	había	mos	A	a	do	había	mos	E	i	do	
Subjunctive	hubieramos	A	a	do	hubieramos	A	a	do	hubieramos	E	i	do	hubieramos	E	i	do
Future Conditional	A	a	r	Ø	e	mos	Ø	1 + 2 =	E	e	/	I	i			
Conditional	A	a	r	Ø	famos	Ø	famos	Ø	famos	E	i	famos	E	i	famos	
3. Complex-Complex Forms	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9							
Future Perfect	hab	Ø	r	Ø	e	mos	E	i	do							
Future Conditional	hab	Ø	r	Ø	fa	mos	A	a	do							

¹Capital letters A, E, and I stand for any root of regular verbs in the corresponding category, e.g., cantar, comer, vivir.

²The scheme takes the first person plural ending. Remember that the third slot is composed of Ø - s - Ø for singular and mos - is - n for plural. Also observe that some forms correlate the 2nd slot according to the person/number slot, e.g., vivimos vs. viven.

N.B. In this scheme the Imperative forms are not included. Nor are the Preterite forms because they are rather irregular and will be dealt with later.

Task: Find the minimal contrastive forms and 'play games' with the verbs of your mother tongue.

MORPHOLOGY OF VERB FORMS

The English verb forms are composed of two parts, a stem and an affix: talk, talks, talked, talking; sing, sings, sang, sung, singing; etc. Spanish verb forms are always made up of three parts, a stem plus two suffixes. This is readily observable in the infinitives and both participles:

compr-a-r	compr-a-do	compr-a-ndo
vend-e-r	vend-i-do	vend-ie-ndo
viv-i-r	viv-i-do	viv-ie-ndo

or in finite forms:

compr-a-n	vend-e-n	viv-e-n
compr-a-s	vend-e-s	viv-e-s
compr-a-mos	vend-e-mos	viv-i-mos

When the finite forms are arranged in a vertical pattern, for example,

compr-a-s
vend-e-n
viv-i-mos

it is apparent that every part in each column or slot is different from every other part in the same slot. This systematic difference reveals a patterned structure which indicates that the traditional division of the verb form into just stem and ending fails to account for all the parts. A series of minimal pairs

compr-a-mos	vend-e-mos	viv-e-s
compr-e-mos	vend-a-mos	viv-a-s

quickly establishes that each part does have a definite function. In these examples the first slot labels the action, the second marks the mode, and the third indicates person and number.

A comparison of *usted-es compr-a-n* and *usted compr-a* shows that singularity, as in pronouns, nouns, and adjectives, is marked by a zero suffix. With zero, written Ø, established as a functioning element, the three parts of the present indicative forms of regular verbs may be shown as follows:

yo	compr-Ø-Ø	vend-Ø-Ø	viv-Ø-Ø
nosotros, -as	compr-a-mos	vend-e-mos	viv-i-mos
usted	compr-a-Ø	vend-e-Ø	viv-e-Ø
ustedes	compr-a-n	vend-e-n	viv-e-n
él, ella	compr-a-Ø	vend-e-Ø	viv-e-Ø
ellos, -as	compr-a-n	vend-e-n	viv-e-n
tú	compr-a-s	vend-e-s	viv-e-s
vosotros, -as	compr-á-is	vend-é-is	viv-ó-is

The present subjunctive forms of the same verbs are:

yo	compr-e-Ø	vend-a-Ø	viv-a-Ø
nosotros, -as	compr-e-mos	vend-a-mos	viv-a-mos
usted	compr-e-Ø	vend-a-Ø	viv-a-Ø
ustedes	compr-e-n	vend-a-n	viv-a-n
él, ella	compr-e-Ø	vend-a-Ø	viv-a-Ø
ellos, -as	compr-e-n	vend-a-n	viv-a-n
tú	compr-e-s	vend-a-s	viv-a-s
vosotros, -as	compr-é-is	vend-á-is	viv-á-is

An analysis of these two sets of forms reveals some basic linguistic facts and much useful pedagogical information:

1. The stem is a constant which combines with all subjects and all suffixes.
2. The person and number suffixes, within their fixed combinatory potential, are constants which combine with all stems and all mode markers.
3. Except for the special contrast between the *tú* and *vosotros* forms, which indicate social relationship as well as person and number, the singular subject is marked by Ø. Restated, this becomes: singular subject is marked by Ø or s; plural subject by mos, n, and is. (In the intimate imperative, d is also a mark of plurality: *hablad*.)

4. The zero suffix and *n* indicate number but not person. A historical accident makes *o* serve as an additional marker of first person singular and indicative mode in the present tense.

5. The *i* verbs maintain their identity only in the infinitive and in two irregularities of the Present Indicative: the *i* of *viv-i-mos* and the absence of one *i* in *viv-o-ís*. The two identical vowels coalesced.

6. The second or mode slot contains only *o*, *a*, *e*, and *i*. The *o* and *i* are predictable irregularities and markers of indicative mode. The basic model contrast is indicated by alternations of *a* and *e*.

7. In principle and scheme the Spanish verb form is composed of two sets of constants, the stem and the person-number suffixes, and several sets of variables which indicate differences in mode, aspect, and tense. The system is marred by certain irregularities which reduce its perfection but the pattern is clear and can serve as an excellent point of departure in teaching.

Whether the second slot in all tense and mode forms is composed of one or more parts depends on the manner and refinement of analysis. A rigorous analysis of the Future and Conditional reveals several parts which have pedagogical significance. These parts can be more readily seen by first analyzing the Present of *haber* and the Present Perfect.

The three basic parts of the Present Indicative of *haber* are:

<i>yo</i>	<i>h-e-o</i>	<i>él</i>	<i>h-a-o</i>
<i>nosotros</i>	<i>h-e-mos</i>	<i>ellos</i>	<i>h-a-n</i>
<i>usted</i>	<i>h-a-o</i>	<i>tú</i>	<i>h-a-s</i>
<i>ustedes</i>	<i>h-a-n</i>	<i>vosotros</i>	<i>hab-é-is</i>

In speech, the stem is non-existent in all but one form (*hab-é-is*); the *h* is a visual fossil which stands for no sound. The second slot is irregular in that it contains both the vowels used to indicate mode. The third slot has the standard person-number suffixes.

The Present of *haber* combines with the Perfect Participle of all three verb classes to produce the Present Perfect:

<i>h-e-mos</i>	{	<i>compr-a-do</i>
		<i>vend-i-do</i>
		<i>viv-i-do</i>

This compound form, as just illustrated, is composed of two sets of three slots each. The principle of the tripartite form is thus retained. Certain obvious accommodations, of course, have been made. There are two stems: one carries the message and the other (the auxiliary)

has been grammaticalized, that is, it is redundant semantically. In all but one case it has also been reduced to zero in speech. The auxiliary stem takes the tense-mode and person-number suffixes; the other stem carries the aspect marker *do*. The class vowels, as in the infinitive, perform no semantic function.

The precise structural difference between the Present Perfect and the Present may be seen by a part by part comparison of these forms: *h-e-mos vend-i-do* and *vend-e-mos*. The stem *vend*, the suffix *mos*, and the class vowel *e ~ i* appear in both tense forms. The difference is found in the presence of the auxiliary stem (*h: o* in speech) and the morpheme indicating perfective aspect (*do*).

With this information firmly established, it is now possible to analyze the future tense which, if communication is to be effective, must differ in detail from the Present and the Present Perfect.

The Spanish Future is composed of the Present of *haber*, the auxiliary, which carries the tense-mode-aspect and person-number suffixes. The main verb has its lexical stem plus its class marker. Consequently, the only possible difference between the Present Perfect and the Future, in terms of parts, must lie in what contrasts with the perfective marker *do*. This contrastive part is *r*, a fact which can be readily observed by using a medieval pattern of the Future for comparison:

<i>h-e-mos vend-i-do</i>
<i>h-e-mos vend-e-r</i>

Modern Spanish has dropped the stem of *haber* (which survives only in *habéis*) and has placed the auxiliary after the main verb: *vend-e-r-e-mos*. In speech the stress falls on the tense-mode slot of the auxiliary, and this explains the written accent mark on certain future forms. There are, then, two basic differences between the Future and Present Perfect in the contemporary language: the contrast between *do* and *r* and the position of the auxiliary verb. This may be shown as follows:

Future
<i>vender hemos vendido</i>
Present Perfect

The Present, as already demonstrated, has three slots. The Present Perfect is composed of two sets of three slots. The Future, in old Spanish, was also made up of two sets of three slots.

The Future Perfect, when originally created, was composed of three sets of three slots: the infinitive of *haber* plus the forms of the Present Perfect.

<i>hab-e-r h-e-mos</i>	{	<i>compr-a-do</i>
		<i>vend-i-do</i>
		<i>viv-i-do</i>

Two of these nine slots have disappeared in modern Spanish: the class marker of *haber* (*habr*) and the stem of the second auxiliary (*h* and *hab*). The result is:

hab-r-e-mos compr-a-do, etc.

It may be helpful, at this juncture, to make an inventory of all the parts used in the forms already analyzed. They are:

1. The stem of the main or message-carrying verb: the lexical symbol.
2. The three class markers, /a/, /e/, /i/, two of which, /a/ and /e/, also function as markers of indicative and subjunctive mode in the present tense.
3. The infinitive mark /r/.
4. The person-number suffixes: *o*, *mos*, *n*, *s*, and *is*.
5. The mark of perfective aspect: *do*.
6. The stem of *haber* which, in speech, is *o* and *hab*.
7. The irregular form *o*, used in the first person singular, Present Indicative.

If one adds to this list the irregular stem of the Present Subjunctive of *haber*, *hay*, the total number of items or parts (excluding the lexical stem) is 13. This is all the student has to memorize in order to create six sets of tense-mode forms which, in most textbook paradigms, add up to a grand total of 108 items. It will be made obvious presently that it is easier to learn the rules of creation than to memorize 108 models.

In all the forms which have been analyzed so far the second or tense-mode slot shows little variation. It is irregular in the Present Indicative of *haber* and this same irregularity appears in the Present Perfect, Future, and Future Perfect. The present subjunctive mode is regularly shown by alternations of /e/ and /a/ in both simple and compound forms (*hay-a-mos*, etc.) The irregularities of the Present of all verb classes are predictable and, so, are considered regular. It is to be noted, and with very special attention, that slot two, discounting irregularities, is exactly the same for all the tense forms described so far. The only differences in the slot are the contrast between indicative and subjunctive. The real significance of these facts will be discussed in another section dealing with usage.

For the moment, it is only important to observe that the Present, Present Perfect, Future, and Future Perfect constitute a set of forms all of which share the same tense-mode markers and all of which deal with events oriented directly to the moment of speaking. For purposes of exposition these will be called the present set.

With the exception of the Preterite, which is essentially an unaltered Latin inheritance, the forms of the past set have exactly the same basic structure as those of the present set. Aside from allomorphic variations in the stem of *haber*, the only difference is found in the parts used in slot two, the tense-mode-aspect slot. This may be shown as follows.

1. To form the Imperfect Indicative:

<i>compr-a-n:</i>	slot two becomes	<i>aba:</i>	<i>compr-aba-n</i>
<i>vend-e-n:</i>	}	<i>ía:</i>	<i>vend-ía-n</i>
<i>viv-e-n:</i>			<i>viv-ía-n</i>

2. To form the Imperfect Subjunctive:

<i>compr-e-n:</i>	slot two becomes	{	<i>ara:</i>	<i>compr-ara-n</i>	
			<i>ase:</i>	<i>compr-ase-n</i>	
<i>vend-a-n:</i>	}	slot two becomes	{	<i>iera:</i>	<i>vend-iera-n</i>
<i>viv-a-n:</i>					<i>iese:</i>

Since *haber*, like any other verb, obeys these same rules, all the past compound tense forms (Preterite Perfect excluded) must be made by putting either *ía*, *iera*, or *iese* in slot two. The stem of *haber* has two allomorphs (*hab* and *hub*). The Perfect Participle remains unchanged. Compare:

<i>h-e-mos vendido</i>	<i>hab-ía-mos vendido</i>
<i>hay-a-mos vendido</i>	<i>hub-iera-mos vendido</i>
<i>vender-e-mos</i>	<i>hub-iese-mos vendido</i>
<i>habr-e-mos vendido</i>	<i>vender-ía-mos</i>
	<i>habr-ía-mos vendido</i>

There are no internal irregularities in the past set in slot two. The fourteen sets of the past paradigm can be created, once the present

set is mastered, by learning six suffixes (*aba, ía, ara, ase, iera, iese*) and one new allomorph of *hab* (*hub*).

During the evolutionary phases through which Latin became Spanish, the Preterite did not undergo the regularization process exhibited by the other tense forms. It has preserved the only systematic irregularity in the person-number slot: *tú* combines with *ste*, and *vosotros* with both *ste* and the standard suffix *is*:

<i>tú</i>	<i>compr-a-ste</i>	<i>vend-i-ste</i>	<i>viv-i-ste</i>
<i>vosotros</i>	<i>compr-a-ste-is</i>	<i>vend-i-ste-is</i>	<i>viv-i-ste-is</i>

Zero survives as the regular mark of the singular, the stem slot remains constant, but the tense-mode-aspect slot is a mixture of debris left over from Latin:

<i>yo</i>	<i>compr-é-ø</i>	<i>vend-í-ø</i>	<i>viv-í-ø</i>
<i>nosotros</i>	<i>compr-a-mos</i>	<i>vend-i-mos</i>	<i>viv-i-mos</i>
<i>usted</i>	<i>compr-ó-ø</i>	<i>vend-í-ø</i>	<i>viv-í-ø</i>
<i>ustedes</i>	<i>compr-aro-n</i>	<i>vend-iero-n</i>	<i>viv-iero-n</i>
<i>él</i>	<i>compr-ó-ø</i>	<i>vend-í-ø</i>	<i>viv-í-ø</i>
<i>ellos</i>	<i>compr-aro-n</i>	<i>vend-iero-n</i>	<i>viv-iero-n</i>
<i>tú</i>	<i>compr-a-ste</i>	<i>vend-i-ste</i>	<i>viv-i-ste</i>
<i>vosotros</i>	<i>compr-a-steis</i>	<i>vend-i-steis</i>	<i>viv-i-steis</i>

Nothing much can be done with the conglomeration of parts in slot two. They have to be memorized. It is helpful to observe that slot two, in *vender* and *vivir*, always begins with the class vowel /i/; that the forms for *usted* and *él* add /o/ to contrast with the first person, and that the *ustedes-ellos* form has the same basic structure as the Imperfect Subjunctive. The only differentiating factor is the contrast between /o/ and /a/:

<i>compr-aro-n</i>	<i>vend-iero-n</i>	<i>viv-iero-n</i>
<i>compr-ara-n</i>	<i>vend-iera-n</i>	<i>viv-iera-n</i>

If the Future Subjunctive and the Preterite Perfect are put aside because of their obsolescence, there remain only three forms to be discussed: the Imperfect Participle and the Imperative with *tú* and *vosotros*.

The Imperfect Participle, like all other forms, has three parts: the stem, the class vowel (diphthongized in two cases), and the suffix *ndo* which stands for imperfect aspect:

<i>compr-a-ndo</i>	<i>vend-ie-ndo</i>	<i>viv-ie-ndo</i>
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The intimate imperative forms also have three parts: the stem, the mode suffix, and the person-number suffix. The mode slot has the same vowel as the indicative, singular is marked by /ø/ and plurality by /d/:

<i>tú</i>	<i>compr-a-ø</i>	<i>vend-e-ø</i>	<i>viv-e-ø</i>
<i>vosotros</i>	<i>compr-a-d</i>	<i>vend-e-d</i>	<i>viv-i-d</i>

There is, perhaps, no need to observe that a rigorous linguistic analysis of the verb forms provides numerous aids to teaching. It is obvious that the memorization of whole words and even half words (stem plus ending) is inefficient. It is equally apparent that both the programming of contact lessons and subsequent drills need to be arranged so that the student may progress in minimal steps through the creative process. When the student understands the prime function of each slot, he can, by simple rules of substitution and transformation, create any other form from any given form, granted, of course, that he knows the class of the verb and can classify it as regular.

The first and essential step is to learn the stem and its meaning. The second essential step is to learn the class of the verb. The infinitive does not have to be the only point of departure in doing this; any form that carries the differentiator will do. The third step should be to learn the person-number suffixes. At this point the student has control of the three constants: stem, class of the verb, and the person-number suffixes. He must now learn that the tense and verb forms have three structures: (1) a simplex form composed of three slots (Infinitive, Perfect and Imperfect Participle, Present Indicative and Subjunctive, Imperfect Indicative and Subjunctive, Preterite, and Imperative); (2) a complex form composed of two sets of three slots (Present and Past Perfect Indicative and Subjunctive, Future, and Conditional), and (3) a second complex form made up of three sets of three slots (Future and Conditional Perfect). With these facts under control, the student can derive any form of all the regular verbs of the language by one of two operations: by slot substitution within the same pattern, or by transforming either complex into simplex patterns or the reverse.

It is an improper waste of time to begin with the infinitive and to train the student to get, for example, *compramos* by dropping the so-called infinitive ending and adding *amos*. Both forms contain /a/ and the real infinitive marker, /r/, stands in the third slot. If it is replaced by *mos*, the student gets *compramos* in one, instead of two, steps. Using the infinitive as the single point of departure is inefficient. The form *venderemos*, for example, contains all the ingredients

of *vendemos*, which can be obtained by eliminating the unnecessary slots (*e* and *r*).

It is important, finally, to observe that the student whose attention is focused on the minimal differentiators will certainly learn to make more accurate and more rapid discriminations and, in the process, improve his comprehension. This writer has encountered hundreds of very advanced students (who learned verb forms as whole words or as stem plus ending) who have been quite incapable of pinpointing the crucial differentiators in *compraban*, *compraran*, and *compraron*. All had failed to discover by themselves that one can get the Imperfect Subjunctive of every regular *a* verb simply by changing the /b/ of the Imperfect to /r/ or the /o/ of the third person plural Preterite to /a/.

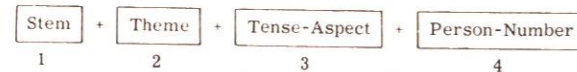
REVIEW

1. Non-compound English and Spanish verb forms have how many parts?
2. Does every part of a conjugated verb form have a specific function?
3. What is wrong with dividing verb forms into just stem and ending?
4. What do the three parts of *vendemos* tell us?
5. What indicates singularity in verb forms?
6. Which parts of the verb are constants? Variables?
7. Which suffixes indicate plurality?
8. How does an *i* verb differ from an *e* verb?
9. What vowels appear in the tense-mode-aspect slot?
10. What is irregular (regular) in the Present Indicative of *haber*?
11. How is the Present Perfect made?
12. How many slots are there in the Present Perfect?
13. What is the function of each slot?
14. The formal difference between Present and Present Perfect is shown by what morphemes?
15. The Future has how many slots?
16. The Future is composed of two basic verb forms. What are they?
17. What is the formal difference between Future and Present Perfect?
18. What explains the written accent on certain future forms?
19. The Future Perfect has how many slots?
20. How can you convert the Present Perfect into Future Perfect?
21. Can you isolate and define the function of the 14 parts used in making the verb forms of the present set?
22. Slot two of all forms of the present set is basically the same. What does this suggest?
23. Can you derive the past set forms from the present set by slot substitution? How would you program the teaching of this?

24. What are the six suffixes that need to be learned in order to create the past set forms?
25. How many allomorphs does the stem of *haber* have?
26. What is the systematic irregularity in slot three of the Preterite?
27. What shows the difference between first and third person singular in the Preterite?
28. What does the suffix *ndo* indicate?
29. Do you know what *aspect* means?
30. What does the suffix *d* indicate?
31. What programmed steps should be followed in teaching verb forms?
32. Which verb forms are simplex and complex? Can you explain all this simply to a student?
33. What marks an infinitive?
34. In view of the above, how should the three classes of the verb be described or named?
35. Why is it inefficient to always begin with the infinitive in teaching verb forms?

VERB FORMS 5

The Spanish VERB FORM contains the following constituents:



Although this is the sequence in which these constituents occur in verbs, it is not the order in which they are generated. The pertinent rule (simplified by omitting predicate nouns or adjectives, objects, adverbs, and so on) shows the following order:

VP → Aux + Verb

AUX is specified as ASPECT plus TENSE, constituent 3 above. The verb itself is simply a stem, constituent 1 (although the infinitive form is customarily shown in dictionary listings and in illustrations of the rules of sentence formation). The THEME CLASS depends on the verb stem, since every stem belongs to a particular theme class, in the same way that all nouns belong to a particular gender class. The actual THEME VOWEL—the overt mark of the theme class—can, however, be manipulated to signal MOOD, and therefore must be distinguished as a separate constituent. The remaining constituent—person-number—does not derive from the verb phrase at all but from the subject. The choice of subject obligatorily assigns the appropriate person-number suffix to the verb.

The constituent elements of the verb phrase are illustrated in the following chart, which shows the layers of derivation in a simplified form:

Subj	VP			
	Aux		Verb	
P + NUM	A + Te	Stem	Theme	
4	3	1	2	

The present chapter deals with the verb FORMS which contain the four functioning constituents listed above. The constituents themselves and their functions in the formation of sentences are for the most part discussed in other chapters. Constituent 4 results from the spread of person-number categories from the subject to the verb. Constituent 3, the auxiliary, is treated in Chapter 6. Alternations in theme vowel mark the subjunctive mood, which is discussed in Chapter 9.

CLASSIFICATION OF VERBS

Verb forms are classified in two ways: by theme class, and by the extent to which their paradigms can be predicted by general rules. There are three theme classes, designated by the theme vowel which appears with the infinitive stem: a, e, i. The last two classes are closely related, and have identical theme vowels in more than two-thirds of their paradigms.

The extent of paradigmatic predictability establishes REGULAR and IRREGULAR sets. Verbs are said to be regular if they conform to the most general rules. The majority of Spanish verbs follow a single paradigm of stem formation and affixation. All verbs which deviate from this paradigm belong to one of the irregular sets. In the discussion which follows, regular verb forms are presented first, and irregular verbs are described by the ways in which they differ from regular verbs.

FORMS OF SPANISH REGULAR VERBS

A full paradigm of three regular verbs, *hablar*, *comer*, *vivir*, representing each of the three theme classes, appears below. The number heading each column indicates the particular constituent of the formation: 1 = stem, 2 = theme vowel, 3 = tense-aspect marker, 4 = person-number marker. The labels accompanying each set derive from constituents 2 and 3, identifying the mood and the tense-aspect category of the set. The sample verbs are cited in phonemic transcription.

		Stem				Theme Vowel				Tense-Aspect				Person-Number			
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Present indicative		abl	o	o	o	kóm	o	o	o	bíb	o	o	o	1	2	3	4
1	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
2	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
3	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
1	pl	á	mos	é	mos	í	mos	í	mos	í	mos	í	mos	í	mos	í	mos
2	pl	á	ys	é	ys	í	ys	í	ys	í	ys	í	ys	í	ys	í	ys
3	pl	a	n	e	n	e	n	e	n	e	n	e	n	e	n	e	n
Present subjunctive		abl	e	o	o	kóm	a	o	o	bíb	a	o	o	1	2	3	4
1	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
2	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
3	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
1	pl	-	mos	-	mos	-	mos	-	mos	-	mos	-	mos	-	mos	-	mos
2	pl	-	ys	-	ys	-	ys	-	ys	-	ys	-	ys	-	ys	-	ys
3	pl	-	n	-	n	-	n	-	n	-	n	-	n	-	n	-	n
Imperfect indicative		abl	á	ba	o	kom	f	a	o	bib	f	a	o	1	2	3	4
1	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
2	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
3	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
1	pl	-	mos	-	mos	-	mos	-	mos	-	mos	-	mos	-	mos	-	mos
2	pl	-	ys	-	ys	-	ys	-	ys	-	ys	-	ys	-	ys	-	ys
3	pl	-	n	-	n	-	n	-	n	-	n	-	n	-	n	-	n

		Stem				Theme Vowel				Tense-Aspect				Person-Number			
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Imperative		abl	a	o	o	kóm	e	o	o	bíb	e	o	o	1	2	3	4
1	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
2	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
3	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
Future indicative		abl	a	o	o	kom	e	o	o	bib	i	o	o	1	2	3	4
1	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
2	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
3	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
Conditional indicative		abl	a	ría	o	kom	e	ría	o	bib	i	ría	o	1	2	3	4
1	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
2	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
3	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
Preterit indicative		abl	o	é	o	kom	o	f	o	bib	o	f	o	1	2	3	4
1	sg	-	a	ste	o	-	f	ste	o	-	f	ste	o	-	f	ste	o
2	sg	-	a	ste	o	-	f	ste	o	-	f	ste	o	-	f	ste	o
3	sg	-	a	ste	o	-	f	ste	o	-	f	ste	o	-	f	ste	o
Past subjunctive, -ra		abl	á	ra	o	kom	yé	ra	o	bib	yé	ra	o	1	2	3	4
1	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
2	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
3	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
Past subjunctive, -se		abl	á	se	o	kom	yé	se	o	bib	yé	se	o	1	2	3	4
1	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
2	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
3	sg	-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
Non-Finite Forms		abl	á	r	o	kom	é	r	o	bib	f	r	o	1	2	3	4
Infinitive (noun)		-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
Perfective participle (adj.)		-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
Imperfective participle (adv.)		-	a	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s	-	e	s	s
Total inflected forms		hablar 46				comer 47				vivir 46							

An inspection of the above lists of forms shows that constituent 1 is entirely stable. By definition, regular verbs are those with only one stem; verbs with variant stems are irregular.

Constituent 4 is also very stable, with the pattern /o, s, o, mos, ys, n/. appearing in all sets except: (1) in the present indicative of *ir* verbs, in which the second person plural form is /-is/; (2) in the preterit, in which the second person singular form is /o/; and (3) in the imperative, in which both second person forms are /o/.

Constituent 2, the theme vowel, is reasonably stable. In most sets the theme vowel is consistent, the exceptions are present indicative with the first person singular /o/ in all three theme-classes and second person plural /o/ in *ir* verbs, the *ir* imperative forms with /e/ for singular but /i/ for plural, and the preterit indicative, in which the theme vowel of the *ar* set is /a/ or /a/ and of the *er* and *ir* sets is /o, i, y/ or /ye/. Note that /i/ occurs followed by a consonant but /y/ followed by a vowel in this set; both are spelled *i*.

The theme vowel of *er* and *ir* verbs is identical, except in the infinitive, in first and second person plural forms of the present indicative, in the plural imperative, and in the forms built on the infinitive (future and conditional). The theme vowel is a signal of mood in present tense forms; the sign of the present subjunctive is a switch of theme vowels between the *ar* and the *er-ir* sets.

The most erratic of the constituents is number 3—the tense-aspect marker—which is a stable /o/ in present indicative and present subjunctive, /ría/ in the conditional, and /ra/ or /se/ in the past subjunctive. In the imperfect, it is /ba/ for *ar* verbs but merely /a/ for *er-ir* verbs. In the future, it is /re/ or /ra/; and in the preterit, it is a complex of /e/ (*ar* verbs) or /i/ (*er-ir* verbs) for first person singular with /ste, ó, o, ste, ro/ for the other person forms. An interesting correlation exists between forms of regular verbs with and without an overt tense-aspect marker. When marked by zero, word stress falls on the stem of the verb except first and second plural forms of the present sets and first and third singular of the preterit. Whenever the tense-aspect slot is occupied by a marker other than zero, word stress falls on the ending.

FORMS OF SPANISH IRREGULAR VERBS

The irregularities fall into two groups: stem irregularities, and stem-affix irregularities. The former are irregular by reason of having more than one stem form, although they take the same endings (theme, tense-aspect, person-number) as the regular verbs. Since the affixes are all shown above, we are concerned here only with stem variation.

There is a fairly large group of verbs¹ that are traditionally classed together as stem-changing or radical-changing. Most of these have one variant stem, but some have two. The particular stem modifications that occur in these verbs are: the insertion of a semivowel /y/ or /w/ before the stressed vowel, which either is, or is changed to,

1. There is a total of about 450 stem-changing verbs in Spanish, including derived forms and rare forms seldom used today. Only 150 or 200 are presented in the usual two- or three-year Spanish course.

IRREGULAR VERB FORMS

Before taking up the matter of irregular verbs, it is necessary to define what is meant by *irregular*. Many school texts ignore the fundamental difference between speech and writing and, as a result, variations in spelling conventions (which should be taught under orthography) are frequently classified as irregularities in the formal structure of the verb. This basic error makes the Present Subjunctive of *dar* irregular simply because *dé* carries a redundant, and arbitrary, written accent mark. The Preterite *vi* (compare *vendí*) is said to be irregular for the opposite reason.

From the point of view of speech (the only criterion for judging forms) *dar* takes /e/ in the second slot in the Present Subjunctive precisely like any other *a* verb. So does *estar*, whose only irregularity lies in the syllable stressed, but not in what is found in each slot:

yo	est-é-ø
nosotros	est-e-mos
usted	est-é-ø
ustedes	est-é-n
él	est-é-ø
ellos	est-é-n
tú	est-é-s
vosotros	est-é-ts

The press of orthographic conventions also causes forms which have *y* as a predictable graphemic variant of *i* (see section on graphemes) to be classed as irregular (*cayendo, yendo, trayendo, cayera*, etc.).

A similar classification is made for *venzo* which has *z* as a graphemic alternate of *c* (*vencer*).

Once spelling peculiarities are properly associated with writing, and divorced from speech, the number of irregular forms is significantly decreased. Those that remain can be taught more effectively by focusing attention on the slot actually containing the irregularity. It gives the student great security to know, for example, that the only irregularity in slot three in the entire language appears in the second and third singular of the Present of *ser*, the single form *es*, which, in theory, should combine with *tú* instead of *usted* and *él*.

The irregularities of slot two, the tense-mode-aspect suffixes, may be classified in several ways. There are, first, the "regular" irregularities of the forms of the regular verbs: the /o/ of the first person singular Present Indicative, the fossil /i/ in the Present of *i* verbs, and the confusion of /a/ and /e/ in the Present Indicative of *haber* which reappears in the Future of all three verb classes. Since these non-systemic deviations from an ideal system are present in the paradigm of every regular verb, it is traditional to treat them separately and as normal. Whatever is different from these, then, is irregular. By these criteria, slot two has no special irregularities in the following tense forms: Present Perfect (indicative and subjunctive), Present Subjunctive, Future, Future Perfect, Conditional, Conditional Perfect, Pluperfect (indicative and subjunctive), Imperfect (indicative and subjunctive) of all *a* verbs. Two verbs, *ir* and *ser*, are the only *i-e* verbs which are irregular in the Imperfect Indicative. The *iba* forms are irregular because the class vowel /i/ combines with the regular forms associated with *a* verbs. *Ser* is peculiar in that the stem *er* combines with a set of suffixes identical to those of the Present Subjunctive. This, obviously, can be exploited in teaching. Compare:

se-a	er-a
se-a-mos	ér-a-mos
se-a-n	er-a-n
se-a-s	er-a-s
se-á-ts	er-a-ts

The abnormal combination of stem plus suffix accounts for the irregularity of the Preterite and Imperfect Subjunctive of *dar* whose stem combines with the regular suffixes of an *e* or *i* verb: *d-i-mos, d-iéramos, d-iése-mos*. When this is pointed out the student has very little to learn. All of the other irregularities in slot two are to be found in the Present Indicative, Imperative, Imperfect Subjunctive, and Preterite.

Aside from the Present of *ser*, the irregularities of the Present in slot two are confined to the first person singular, and appear in very few verbs: *sé, doy, voy, estoy*, and *soy*.

The irregularities of the Imperative are restricted to the *tú* form. This form is sometimes apocopated and slot two is eliminated: *pon, haz, ven*, etc.

The peculiarities of the Imperfect Subjunctive are restricted and highly predictable. Whenever the stem terminates in a sound which is similar to /i/, the /i/ of *iera* and *iese* is dropped and the stem sound becomes part of the tense-mode suffix. This happens regularly with all verbs whose stem ends in /ñ/ and /ll/:¹

zambullera	zambullese
gruñera	gruñese
mullera	mullese
ciñera	ciñese

This same irregularity appears in the Imperfect Participle (*mullendo, gruñendo*) and all preterite forms where the regular tense-mode suffix begins with /i/: *mulló, mulleron, gruñó, gruñeron*, etc.

The jota, as stem final, produces the same results in the Imperfect Subjunctive and Preterite: *trajeran, condujeran, dijieran; trajeron, condujeron, dijeron*, etc.

It is to be remembered that the graphic *y* is a spelling variant of *i* and that *creyera, cayendo*, etc. are not irregular. The *y* appears regularly as syllable initial.

The verbs *ser* and *ir* also do not have the /i/ in the Imperfect Subjunctive and Preterite: *fuera, fueron*, etc. The reason for this is that Spanish has no [wy] sequence.

Slot two of the Preterite, as already observed, is a hodge-podge of variable suffixes inherited from Latin. This tends to disguise the fact that deviations from the norm are exceedingly few. *Dar* takes the regular *e* verb suffixes. *Estar* and *andar* also take *e* verb suffixes with two variations, /e/ for /i/ in the first person singular (*anduve, estuve*) and /o/ for /ió/ in the third (*anduvo, estuvo*). This same substitution produces the only irregularity in twelve other verbs (plus all their derivatives), all of which take the regular *e* verb suffixes in all other forms: *cupe, cupo; deduje, dedujo; dije, dijo; hube, hubo; hice, hizo; pude, pudo; puse, puso; quise, quiso; supe, supo; traje, traje; tuve, tuvo; vine, vino*. The Preterite of *ser* and *ir* has just one irregularity in slot two, the /e/ of *fue*.

¹ For an exhaustive list of these and all other irregular verbs, see Aurelio García Ellorrio, *Diccionario de la conjugación* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Kapelusz, 1946).

A comparison of the irregularities belonging to each slot of the tense-mode forms reveals an increasing number from slot three to slot one, the stem. This is to be expected. The stem slot is filled with forms which are members of an open system and which undergo changes characteristic of the whole language. The shift of *cont* to *cuent* parallels the pattern of *punte* and *pontifical*. The change from /e/ in *veo* to /i/ in *viste* is duplicated in *visible, visión*, etc. The stem, in other words, follows language-wide tendencies which are neither restricted nor inhibited by other factors. The two sets of suffixes, in contrast, are closed systems. The number of forms is finite and each form is assigned a specific meaning and function. Each set, in this sense, is a system which represents a fixed and obligatory way of organizing reality. The system, as a kind of integrated organism, resists change and irregularities which obscure the internal structure of the system. The system, moreover, operates as a force to reduce irregularities as evidenced by the continuous efforts of children to restore order by reconstructing, for example, *sabo* for *sé*.

It is obvious that if a set of forms is to function as a system, the forms must be isolated and recognized as members of the set. It is equally obvious that irregularities within each set must be dealt with in terms of the set, that is, in terms of deviations from the set norms. Finally, it is apparent that the student cannot efficiently learn the suffix sets nor the deviations without having his attention focused on the three verb slots and the forms that can occupy each slot. Irregularities can then be specified in terms of each slot and the student's memory load is drastically reduced. Textbooks which print irregular forms in black-face type do a great disservice to the student by putting the whole word in black face. The irregular part of *estuviéramos*, for example, is only *estuv*; the suffixes *iera* and *mos* are perfectly regular, and this fact should be carefully called to the student's attention. Treating the entire form as irregular does not pin-point the irregularity and, what is worse, frequently condemns the student to memorizing all irregular forms one by one.

The student who already knows, for example, how to divide verbs into the three slots and can form the subjunctive of a regular *e* verb, can learn the Present Subjunctive of *haber* simply by changing one slot. The stem slot has the irregular form *hay*; the other two slots are regular. In short, learning one slot form replaces learning five whole words. This can be made apparent to the student as follows:

yo	hay-a
nosotros	hay-a-mos

<i>usted</i>	<i>hay-a</i>
<i>ustedes</i>	<i>hay-a-n</i>
<i>él</i>	<i>hay-a</i>
<i>ellos</i>	<i>hay-a-n</i>
<i>tú</i>	<i>hay-a-s</i>
<i>vosotros</i>	<i>hay-á-is</i>

The student who is taught slot analysis is also not dependent on the Preterite third person plural as the base for irregular imperfect subjunctive forms. The forms can be predicted from the termination of the preterite stem. Stems which end in *ll*, *ñ*, and *j* take *era*; all others take *iera*.

The irregular stems will not be discussed here. The traditional division of the verb form into stem and ending focused attention upon them, and as a result they are usually well described in most texts.²

² For an exhaustive classification of irregular stems, see M. M. Ramsey and R. K. Spaulding, *A Textbook of Modern Spanish* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1956), pp. 257-86.

REVIEW

1. By what criterion are irregular forms determined?
2. Why cannot writing be used to determine irregularities?
3. How should the difference between *venzo* and *vence* be taught?
4. What is the only irregularity in slot three?
5. What is the difference between "regular" irregularities and irregularities in slot two?
6. Which verb forms have no irregularities in slot two?
7. How can the teaching of the Preterite and Imperfect Subjunctive of *dar* be made easy?
8. What is irregular about some *tú* imperative forms?
9. What are the predictable irregularities of the Imperfect Subjunctive?
10. How is the Preterite irregular?
11. Why are there more irregularities in the stem than in the verb suffixes?
12. In what ways can slot analysis make teaching irregular forms easier?

/e/; or vowel raising, in which a mid vowel, /e/ or /o/, is replaced by a high vowel, /i/ or /u/.

STEM IRREGULARITIES

There are three classes of stem changing verbs of the type which involve only a modification of the stem vowel. Classes 1 and 3 contain two-stem verbs and class 2 contains three-stem verbs. Class 1 verbs are from *ar* and *er* conjugations. The specific stem vowel changes are /o/ → /wé/ and /e/ → /yé/, usually though not always spelled *ue* and *ie*.

Only seven inflected forms are affected in class 1 stem-changing verbs, in the present indicative, present subjunctive, and imperative sets.

Class 1. Stem-Vowel-Changing Verbs

		/o/ ~ /wé/		/e/ ~ /yé/			
		contar	volver	pensar	perder		
Present indicative							
1	sg	kwént	o	bwéib	o	pyéns	o
2		kwént	as	bwéib	es	pyéns	as
3		kwént	a	bwéib	e	pyéns	a
1	pl	kont	ámos	bolb	émos	pens	ámos
2		kont	áys	bolb	éys	pens	áys
3		kwént	an	bwéib	en	pyéns	an
Present subjunctive							
1	sg	kwént	e	bwéib	a	pyéns	e
2		kwént	es	bwéib	as	pyéns	es
3		kwént	e	bwéib	a	pyéns	e
1	pl	kont	émos	bolb	ámos	pens	émos
2		kont	éys	bolb	áys	pens	éys
3		kwént	en	bwéib	an	pyéns	en
Imperative							
2	sg	kwént	a	bwéib	e	pyéns	a
2	pl	kont	ád	bolb	éd	pens	ád

It will be noticed that the changes are correlated with position of the stress on each form. Where the stress is on the stem, /wé/ or /yé/ appears; where the stress is on the ending, /o/ or /e/ appears. Usually /wé/ alternates with /o/, but in one verb—*jugar*—the alternation is /wé/ ~ /u/.

Class 3 verbs show a vowel change with /e/ and /i/ in the variant stems. This change occurs in the stressed stems of the present indicative and the imperative, in all the forms of the present and past subjunctive, in the third person forms of the preterit and in the imperfective participle. Only verbs from the *ir* conjugation with /e/ in the infinitive stem appear in class 3.

Class 3. Stem-Vowel-Changing Verbs

		/e/ ~ /i/			
		pedir		pedir	
Present indicative					
1	sg	pid	o	pid	a
2		pid	es	pid	as
3		pid	e	pid	a
1	pl	ped	imos	pid	ámos
2		pid	is	pid	áys
3		pid	en	pid	an
Preterit indicative					
1	sg	ped	i	pid	yéra (yése)
2		ped	iste	pid	yéras (yéses)
3		pid	yó	pid	yéra (yésc)
1	pl	ped	imos	pid	yéramos (yésemos)
2		pid	isteys	pid	yérayas (yéseys)
3		pid	yéron	pid	yéran (yésen)
Imperative					
2	sg	pid	e	pid	yéndo
2	pl	ped	íd		
Imperfective participle					
				pid	yéndo

Class 2 verbs show a combination of the patterns of classes 1 and 3. These are three-stem verbs. The alternation /wé/ ~ /o/ or /yé/ ~ /e/ is found whenever it occurs also in the pattern of class 1; the alternation /u/ ~ /o/ or /i/ ~ /e/ is found in the additional forms that are affected in class 3. Only verbs from the *ir* conjugation appear in class 2.

Class 2. Stem-Vowel-Changing Verbs

		/o/ ~ /wé/ ~ /u/		/e/ ~ /yé/ ~ /i/			
		dormir		sentir			
Present indicative							
1	sg	dwérm	o	syént	o	dwérm	a
2		dwérm	es	syént	es	dwérm	as
3		dwérm	e	syént	e	dwérm	a
1	pl	dorm	ámos	sent	imos	durm	ámos
2		dorm	áys	sent	is	durm	áys
3		dwérm	en	syént	en	dwérm	an
Preterit indicative							
1	sg	dorm	i	sent	i	durm	yéra (yése)
2		dorm	iste	sent	iste	durm	yéras etc.
3		durm	yó	sent	yó	durm	yéra
1	pl	dorm	imos	sent	imos	durm	yéramos
2		dorm	isteys	sent	isteys	durm	yérayas
3		durm	yéron	sent	yéron	durm	yéran
Imperative							
2	sg	dwérm	e	syént	e	durm	yéndo
2	pl	dorm	íd	sent	íd		
Imperfective participle							
						durm	yéndo