

Hablando de gramática

por Señor Conner

Señor Conner is the author of the popular language series BREAKING THE SPANISH BARRIER. Each month he will feature a grammatical topic of interest to our readers. Do you have ideas of topics you would like to see covered? E-mail Señor Conner at: john@tobreak.com. You can also visit his website: www.tobreak.com.

¡Perfecto! The present perfect subjunctive

As spring is starting to creep in around many parts of the country, it feels like a good time to do a little more subjunctive work. This time of year is one for cool weather, rain and some clouds. That image reminds me of the subjunctive, a mood used frequently in Spanish.

This month we are going to consider the **present perfect subjunctive**. It's very useful and remarkably easy to use! It's found in a dependent clause (after a "que"), and, like the present perfect indicative, describes events that, from the speaker's perspective, have occurred fairly recently or are in some way connected to the present.

Let's look at a few examples right away before we start our "official" analysis.

EXAMPLES: *Espero que Uds. **hayan visto** la magnífica película de Guillermo del Toro, Pan's Labyrinth.*
I hope you all have seen the magnificent movie of Guillermo del Toro, *Pan's Labyrinth*.

*Me alegro de que tú **hayas llegado** temprano esta noche.*
I'm happy that you have arrived early tonight.

*Nos frustra que no **haya nevado** mucho este invierno.*
It frustrates us that it hasn't snowed a lot this winter.

How is the present perfect subjunctive formed?

The formula is quite simple:

Present subjunctive of the auxiliary verb "haber"			past participle
<i>haya</i>	<i>hayamos</i>		<i>hablado</i>
<i>hayas</i>	<i>hayáis</i>	+	<i>comido</i>
<i>haya</i>	<i>hayan</i>		<i>vivido</i>

When is the present perfect subjunctive used?

The present perfect subjunctive is often found in a dependent clause (after "que") when the main clause expresses some sort of emotion (hope, happiness, frustration, sadness, surprise, etc.) about an action that has happened fairly recently.

Verb of emotion + que + present perfect subjunctive in main clause

EXAMPLES: *Siento que mi papá no me haya dejado el coche.*
I'm sorry that my dad hasn't left me the car.

“No me sorprende que las Dixie Chicks hayan ganado tantos Grammys esta noche”, dijo mi cuñada.
“It doesn't surprise me that the Dixie Chicks have won so many Grammys tonight,” my sister-in-law said.

Me molesta que Ryan Phillippe y Reese Witherspoon no se hayan hablado el uno al otro recientemente.
It bothers me that Ryan Phillippe and Reese Witherspoon haven't talked to each other recently.

¡Qué lástima que nadie se haya puesto un traje de baño en esta playa!
What a shame that no one has put on a bathing suit on this beach!

(Note: In this last sentence, the expression “*Qué lástima*” expresses the emotion!)

Here are few things to keep in mind when using the present perfect subjunctive:

- If there is an object pronoun in the sentence, you will find it only before the conjugated form of “haber” (*me hayan dejado, se hayan hablado*).
- This construction is purely verbal – the past participle here always ends in “o” – it does not agree with anything! (i.e., “Me alegro de que María haya cantada hoy” is wrong! – *Me alegro de que María haya cantado* is perfect!)
- Some have said that all present perfect tenses are loved by Santa Claus, because they start with the letter “h” and end with an “o.”

He hablado, Has comido, Han vivido → Ho-Ho-Ho!

- Remember that “*que*” introduces a new subject and a new clause. If there is no “*que*,” you will likely be using an infinitive! (e.g., *Me alegro de estar aquí esta noche*. I am happy to be here tonight.)

PRUEBA DE REPASO

Complete the following sentences with the present perfect, the present perfect subjunctive or an infinitive.

- Simon Cowell siente mucho que los chicos no _____ muy bien esta noche. (cantar)
- Temo que tú no me _____ la verdad. (decir)
- Es cierto que los Colts _____ el Super Bowl este año. (ganar)
(Be careful here! There is no emotion expressed!)
- Nos frustra que los chicos _____ la basura al lado de la carretera. (echar)
- Me alegro de _____ ir contigo al concierto de John Mayer. (poder)
- ¿No te molesta que nadie nos _____ esta noche? (llamar)
- Me encanta que mi novio me _____ el nuevo disco compacto de Mary J. Blige. (comprar)
- Mi hermana siente mucho que no _____ hoy. (nevar)
- Nos irrita _____ que estudiar tanto para el examen. (tener)
- Estoy triste de que mis amigos todavía no _____ del cine. (volver)