

Hablando de gramática

por el 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.

How about another little quiz?

Another year has passed since I began writing for *Think Spanish Magazine*. Last month, I contributed my twenty-fourth article! Over this past year, we have considered an incredible collection of grammatical topics: negative constructions, polite requests, “lo” and “le,” the subjunctive after verbs of emotion, idiomatic expressions, demonstrative adjectives, “*ESCAPA*” expressions that use the subjunctive, relative pronouns, the present perfect subjunctive, cool *refranes*, and the preterite vs. the imperfect. We truly saw so many incredible ways that Spanish speakers describe the world around them.

As the summer of 2007 is nearing its end, let’s see how many of these concepts you remember. (For those of you new to *Think Spanish Magazine*., never fear, I will offer hints after every sentence!). I recommend that everyone cover up the hint that follows each of the following fifteen sentences. Try to answer first without the hint, but then feel free to use it to help lead you to the promised land. Answers, as always, will follow the exercises.

In September, we will begin to look at some new ideas and revisit some classic grammatical structures. Keep sending in your wonderful suggestions for articles. It is tremendously helpful to me.

PRUEBA DE REPASO

Fill in the blank with the correct answer by conjugating the given verb, choosing between the alternatives offered, translating, making the word “agree” with the rest of the sentence, or by just leaving the space blank!

1) _____ chico enfrente del banco es mi primo; _____ en la moto es mi cuñada. (This/that one)

Hint: Do you recall demonstrative adjectives and pronouns (i.e., *este, esta, estos, estas, etc.* – “this” and “these” have t’s!) Remember, the demonstrative pronoun in the above sentence will need a written accent mark.

2) Me alegro de que Jordin Sparks _____ la competición de *American Idol* este año. Tiene una voz realmente divina. (has won)

Hint: This sentence will call for the present perfect subjunctive! When you express emotion about an action described in a dependent clause (after the “que”), you need some form of the subjunctive. The present perfect subjunctive combined the subjunctive of “haber” – *haya, hayas, haya, etc.* with a past participle – *hablado, comido, vivido, etc.*

3) La amiga de mis primos, _____ vive en Cartagena, acaba de enviarme un mensaje en mi teléfono celular. (the one)

Hint: Relative pronouns refer to a subject mentioned earlier in the sentence and help to connect that subject to actions mentioned later in the sentence. Though “que” is by far the most common relative pronoun, you must use a longer form in this sentence because you are referring to “la amiga” here and NOT to “mis primos.” So choose among: *el que, la que, etc.* or *el cual, la cual, etc.* Note: More than one answer is possible here!

4) _____ las seis de la tarde anoche cuando Barack Obama y Hillary Clinton _____ el debate en el programa *Nightline*. (Ser/comenzar)

Hint: This sentence presents an opportunity to show that you remember the differences between the preterite and the imperfect. Which is used to tell time? Which one describes COMPLETE action? Remember, the second verb means “to begin.” Once the beginning is over, it makes sense to use the preterite!

5) ¿Tienes algunos amigos que hablen ruso? – No, no tengo _____ (any)

Hint: This one is a little trickier than it looks. We want to use an indefinite here, and it needs to be NEGATIVE in Spanish because the main clause of the answer is negative. In addition, you may need this hint: Spanish does not generally make an indefinite negative plural! (That seems very logical, in fact, as one shouldn't have to make the concept of nothing plural!)

6) Buenas tardes. _____ hablar con el jefe de la empresa, por favor. (I would like)

Hint: Here, the speaker is making a polite request. The conditional tense as well as the imperfect subjunctive are structures that are often used to convey a tone of politeness.

7) A mi hermano Paco _____ encantaría ir a la fiesta, pero, por desgracia, nadie _____ ha invitado todavía. (Insert a needed object pronoun in each blank space).

Hint: Here is a list of the direct object pronouns: me, te, lo, la, nos, os, los, las. The indirect object pronouns are: me, te, le, nos, os, les. Which do you need in which space? Hmmm. Think it over.

8) Antes de que _____ el nuevo libro de Harry Potter en julio, yo ya había pedido tres copias en Amazon.com. (salir)

Hint: There are certain adverbial expressions that ALWAYS use the subjunctive. If you remember the word ESCAPA, you will have them at hand: en caso de que, sin que, con tal de que, antes de que, para que, a menos que. Why would this sentence need some PAST subjunctive form?

9) No hay mal que por bien no _____ (venir)

Hint: This is a classic “refrán” in Spanish that lets us know that all will eventually turn out well. The grammar needed here is the subjunctive because the main clause is “ghost-like”! Do you remember that idea?

10) He oído que Javier Bardem _____ del protagonista Florentino Ariza en la nueva película *El amor en los tiempos del cólera*. (plays the role)

Hint: “To play a role” is an idiomatic expression that uses the infinitive “hacer.” Do you remember it?

11) En la fiesta de anoche nosotras _____ la nueva canción de Beyoncé mientras que nuestras amigas _____ con sus novios. (escuchar/bailar)

Hint: This sentence is trying to describe two ongoing actions in the past that were happening at the same time. The imperfect tense would be the best choice here!

12) Es muy triste que _____ tanto. Por eso, no podemos jugar al tenis. (llover)

Hint: Here is another sentence where the main clause is expressing emotion about an action in a dependent clause (after “que”). Go with a subjunctive!

13) El amigo de Liliana, _____ es esa chica rubia, acaba de invitarme a su casa. (who)

Hint: Another relative pronoun. This relative pronoun is referring to Liliana. How can you tell? (I wouldn't choose the long form! Go with a short one!)

14) Voy a enviarle un regalo a Ricky Martin para que _____ cuánto lo quiero. (saber)

Hint: Another ESCAPA adverbial expression. You need a subjunctive!

15) _____, si breve, dos veces bueno. (That which is good)

Hint: This wonderful “refrán” is formed with the neuter “lo” plus an adjective. The resultant phrase refers to “The good part” or “That which is good.”

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| ANSWERS | 1) Este/esa | 6) Me gustaría/Quisiera | 1) escuchábamos/bailaban |
| 2) haya ganado | 7) le/lo | 12) llueva/haya llovido/lloviera | 13) quien (que) |
| 3) la que/la cual | 8) saliera | 14) sepas | 15) Lo bueno |
| 4) Eran/comenzaron | 9) venga | 10) hace el papel | |
| 5) ninguno | | | |