

Re: conjugation patterns in Spanish

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- *From:* "John Atkinson" <johnacko@xxxxxxxxxxxxx>
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"Alexei A. Frounze" <alexfru@xxxxxxx> wrote in message
<news:499pksFn32rkU2@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>

John Atkinson wrote:

"Alexei A. Frounze" <alexfru@xxxxxxx> wrote in message

...

Here's the bad thing I've discovered after hours of studying
the verb
conjugation patterns in Spanish...

There're a number of verbs which change their e to ie under
the
stress, examples:

pensar
negar
enterrar, cerrar
confesar
dispertar
manifestar
entender

I was trying to find patterns which would tell me if I need to
make
that change from e to ie.
At first I tried taking as pattern the part of word starting at
the
vowel in the next to last syllable, e.g. ensar, egar, etc and see
if
I can make a decision based on that.
To make sure I was doing the right thing I then tried to find
regular
verbs or those that would match the same patterns but as
regular
verbs would not the change from e to ie, and I found plenty

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of such
verbs, and here are some of them:

dispensar
llegar
esperar
expresar
acertar
contestar, prestar
vender, aprender, comprender

One interesting pair is pensar and dispensar. First verb is irregular, second verb is regular yet they have exactly the same pattern, including the consonant before ensar.

Negar and llegar could probably be explained this way: n can be softened (by changing the e following it to ie), while ll can't because it's already soft (compared to l).

Enterrar/cerrar vs esperar... Following the logic from the previous pair here, in all verbs the consonant before e could be softened (I know that there're words and conjugations where it happens), but this happens only in some verbs, not all where possible.

Confesar vs expresar -- same thing, however, I would probably be less willing to soften r than f. Maybe at this point I should start including into the pattern the sequence of consonants that comes before the vowel in the next to last syllable, e.g. nfesar vs sperar. I haven't tried that yet.

Dispertar vs acertar -- same thing. But if I were to take as patterns spertar and certar, I'd arrive at conclusion that p in sp+e may or may not get soften -- just compare dispertar and esperar from the previous pair. This makes it odd.

Manifestar vs contestar/prestar -- f in festar is OK to soften and t in ntestar is also OK (example: entender), but I'd probably not do that for r in prestar.

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Finally, *entender* vs *vender/aprender/comprender*... *t* in *entender* gets softened and *v* in *vender* could be softened too (example: *venir*), but again, I'd probably not soften *r* in *prender* and *mprender*.

So, these findings render simple pattern-based decision making if not just complicated (taking bigger portions of verbs as patterns) then impossible. What do you think?

You're over-complicating things.

Most verbs obey the standard sound-changes:

/ie/ in stressed syllables comes from proto-western-Romance */E/* which comes from Latin */e/*.

/e/ in stressed syllables comes from PWR */e/* which comes from Latin */i/* or */e:/*.

Examples:

niego, from Latin *nego*:

peso, from Latin *pe:nso*:

veo, from Latin *video*:

llego, from Latin *plico*:

But, there are quite a few exceptions. Mostly, they once did the right thing, but switched during the course of their history.

Examples:

pienso, used to be *penso*, from Latin *pe:nso*:

presto, used to be *priesto*, from Latin *praesto*:

llevo, used to be *lievo*, from Latin *levo*: (*/li/ > /ll/* is irregular)

This is interesting John. But I don't know Latin. And I'm not sure how that missing knowledge could apply it to my problem with Spanish. I would not be able to do a 1 to 1 mapping between Latin and Spanish, would I? That means instead of adding certainty, I'd adding uncertainty, which is no good. :(

Yes, and this objection is equally valid for native speakers of Spanish. Spanish kids aren't born knowing Latin. But somehow they manage to learn the four hundred or so verbs that have */ie/* or */ue/* when the root is stressed and */e/* or */o/* when the ending is stressed. Or, if they internalise this as a general rule, they have to learn the hundreds of verbs which are exceptions to the rule, the ones which don't diphthongise */e/* or

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/o/ when the root is stressed.

This doesn't faze Spanish kids at all, but it does worry linguists who study language acquisition, who like to think that kids devise internal grammars which consist mostly of rules, with a comparatively small number of exceptions (irregularities) which mostly apply to the commonest words and can be listed individually in the grammar. The idea of several hundred irregular verbs in a language is not easy to fit into the way they postulate children's internal grammar-forming devices should work.

Anyway, if the many experts who've agonised over this problem can't find a way out, I don't like your chances. Sorry, you'll just have to learn which group each verb belongs to, one at a time.

John.

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