

## COMPOUNDING IN SPANISH

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In any preliminary examination of Spanish morphology, it becomes readily apparent that compounding is a highly productive process in the language. A closer look at the structure of compounds that are constructed of free forms also suggests that they are interpreted by the native speaker of Spanish as being phrasal in nature.

Compound nouns, adjectives, and verbs fall into (at least) the following categories:

1) Nouns:	2) Adjectives:	3) Verbs:
a) [Verb + Noun] <sub>N</sub>	a) [Noun + Adj] <sub>Adj</sub>	a) [Prep + Verb] <sub>V</sub>
b) [Adj + Noun] <sub>N</sub>	b) [Adj + Adj] <sub>Adj</sub>	b) [Adj + Verb] <sub>V</sub>
c) [Prep + Noun] <sub>N</sub>	c) [Adj + Noun] <sub>Adj</sub>	c) [Oddities] <sub>V</sub>
d) [Noun + Noun] <sub>N</sub>		
e) [Oddities] <sub>N</sub>		

It can be seen from the above classification scheme that many kinds of combinations occur, and a specified combination may form new compounds in more than one category. For example, the combination [Adj + Noun] can be seen to contribute to both the noun and adjective categories. Verbs, adjectives, prepositions and nouns may all combine with a noun as the second element to form new compound nouns. The category [Oddities] in each case contains at present only one or two unusual examples which probably do not represent productive patterns.

The examples that follow are shown in standard Spanish orthography. Note that word-initial /r/, which is trilled, is written /rr/ when compounding places it in intervocalic position; this device distinguishes it from the normally flapped intervocalic /r/, i.e., *para* + *rayos* = *pararrayos*. The definite articles usually listed with nouns to show grammatical gender play no part in the compounding process and have therefore been omitted. Plurals of nouns are shown in parentheses wherever they differ in form from the singular.

The majority of COMPOUND NOUNS belong to category (1a) and are masculine in gender (even if their noun element is feminine) unless they refer specifically to a feminine agent. The first element is a transitive verb whose object is the following noun according to the formula '{Agent/Instrument} that VERB (the) NOUN<sub>Obj</sub>'. The first two compounds listed below can be used as either agent or instrument, depending on the context, and those that follow represent either agents or instruments.

Verb:		Noun:		Compound:	
<i>salvar</i>	'save'	<i>vida(s)</i>	'life'	<i>salvavidas</i>	'lifeguard' 'life preserver'
<i>guardar</i>	'protect' 'keep'	<i>ropa</i>	'clothes'	<i>guardarropa</i>	'cloakroom, wardrobe' 'cloakroom attendant'
<i>rascar</i>	'scratch' 'scrape'	<i>espalda(s)</i>	'back' 'spine'	<i>rascaespalda(s)</i>	'backscratcher'
"		<i>tripa(s)</i>	'gut' 'intestine'	<i>rascatripas</i> <sup>1</sup>	'third-rate violinist'
"		<i>cielo(s)</i>	'sky' 'heaven'	<i>rascacielos</i>	'skyscraper'
<i>matar</i>	'kill'	<i>mosca(s)</i>	'fly'	<i>matamoscas</i>	'fly swatter'
"		<i>burro(s)</i>	'donkey'	<i>mataburros</i>	'dictionary'
"		<i>fuego(s)</i>	'fire'	<i>matafuego(s)</i>	'fire extinguisher'
<i>cubrir</i>	'cover'	<i>cama(s)</i>	'bed'	<i>cubrecama(s)</i>	'bedspread'
"		<i>tetera(s)</i>	'teapot'	<i>cubretetera(s)</i>	'tea cosy'
<i>espantar</i>	'scare'	<i>pájaro(s)</i>	'bird'	<i>espantapájaros</i>	'scarecrow'
<i>oler</i>	'sniff' 'smell'	<i>flor(es)</i>	'flower'	<i>hueleflor(es)</i>	'idiot, fool'
		<i>guiso(s)</i>	'stew'	<i>hueleguisos</i>	'sponger, uninvited guest'
<i>pasar</i>	'pass (by)'	<i>tiempo(s)</i>	'time'	<i>pasatiempo(s)</i>	'pastime'
<i>limpiar</i>	'clean'	<i>bota(s)</i>	'boot'	<i>limpiabotas</i>	'bootblack'
"		<i>chimenea(s)</i>	'chimney'	<i>limpiachimeneas</i>	'chimney sweep'
"		<i>diente(s)</i>	'tooth'	<i>limpiadientes</i>	'toothpick'
<i>guardar</i>	'protect' 'keep'	<i>bosque(s)</i>	'forest'	<i>guardabosque(s)</i>	'gamekeeper'
"		<i>coche(s)</i>	'car'	<i>guardacoches</i>	'parking attendant'
"		<i>cabra(s)</i>	'goat'	<i>guardacabras</i>	'goatherd'

<sup>1</sup> Some of these compounds have humorous or perjorative intent and supplement already existing nouns: *rascatripas* ~ *violinista*, *mataburros* ~ *diccionario*, *sacamuélas* ~ *dentista*, etc.

Verb:		Noun:		Compound:	
<i>guardar</i>		<i>costa(s)</i>	'coast' 'shoreline'	<i>guardacostas</i>	'coastguard vessel'
"		<i>espalda(s)</i>	'back'	<i>guardaespaldas</i>	'bodyguard'
"		<i>meta(s)</i>	'goal'	<i>guardameta(s)</i>	'goalie'
"		<i>joya(s)</i>	'jewel'	<i>guardajoyas</i>	'jewel case'
<i>quitar</i>	'remove' 'take away'	<i>sol(es)</i>	'sun'	<i>quitasol(es)</i>	'sunshade'
"		<i>esmalte(s)</i>	'enamel'	<i>quitaesmalte(s)</i>	'polish remover'
"		<i>mancha(s)</i>	'stain'	<i>quitamanchas</i>	'stain remover'
"		<i>miedo(s)</i>	'fear'	<i>quitamiedos</i>	'handrail'
"		<i>pena(s)</i>	'sorrow'	<i>quitapenas</i>	'distraction'
"		<i>nieve(s)</i>	'snow'	<i>quitanieves</i>	'snowplow'
<i>sacar</i>	'extract'	<i>muela(s)</i>	'molar'	<i>sacamuelas</i>	'dentist'
"		<i>corcho(s)</i>	'cork'	<i>sacacorchos</i>	'corkscrew'
"		<i>falta(s)</i>	'fault'	<i>sacafaltas</i>	'faultfinder'
"		<i>punta(s)</i>	'point'	<i>sacapuntas</i>	'pencil sharpener'
<i>portar</i>	'hold' 'carry'	<i>pluma(s)</i>	'feather'	<i>portaplumas</i>	'penholder'
"		<i>voz</i> ( <i>voces</i> )	'voice'	<i>portavoz</i> ( <i>-voces</i> )	'spokesman'
"		<i>avion(es)</i>	'airplane'	<i>port(a)aviones</i>	'aircraft carrier'
"		<i>papel(es)</i>	'paper'	<i>portapapeles</i>	'briefcase'
<i>romper</i>	'break'	<i>hielo(s)</i>	'ice'	<i>rompehielos</i>	'icebreaker'
"		<i>cabeza(s)</i>	'head'	<i>rompecabezas</i>	'(jigsaw) puzzle'

In all cases, the surface form of the compound parallels the corresponding verb phrase using the third person singular, present tense of the verb, as can be seen in the following examples:

*El muchacho limpia chimeneas.*  
'The boy cleans chimneys.'

(*el*) *limpiachimeneas*  
'(the) chimney sweep'

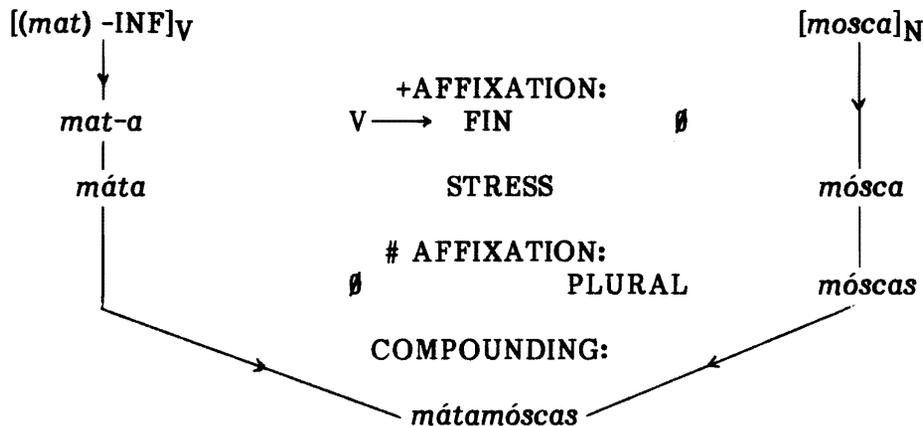
*Mi tía pasa el tiempo tejiendo.*  
'My aunt passes the time knitting.'

(*el*) *pasatiempo*  
'(the) pastime'

*Fernando huele las flores.*  
'Ferdinand smells the flowers.'

*(el) hueleflor*  
'(the) idiot, fool'

In addition, the last example contains an irregular verb whose root vowel changes in the present tense, thus providing evidence that the infinitive does not supply the basis for the compound: *oler*, 'to smell', does not produce \**oleflor*. A derivation can then proceed as shown below for *el matamoscas*, 'fly swatter':



Note that the number (usually plural) of the constituent noun is often determined by the requirements of the verb phrase: a *salvavidas* saves lives, a *matamoscas* is used to kill flies, a *guardajoyas* usually contains more than one jewel, and a good *espantapájaros* should scare all the crows. There seem to be no phonological reasons why the singular noun element does not occur (\**salvavida*, \**matamosca*, \**guardajoya*, \**espantapájaro*). On the other hand, one has only one back to scratch with a *rascaespalda*, one sun to be protected from by a *quitasol*, a *matafuego* is designed to extinguish an unexpected fire, and a *guardameta* defends only one goal. This is only a general consideration, however, and some compounds appear to be open to argument on this point, i.e., *el hueleflor* or *el quitamiedos*. All compounds are subject to plural formation according to the usual rules of Spanish, as follows:

<i>los salvavidas</i>	'the lifeguards (or preservers)'
<i>los matamoscas</i>	'the fly swatters'
<i>los guardajoyas</i>	'the jewel cases'
<i>los espantapájaros</i>	'the scarecrows'
<i>los rascaespaldas</i>	'the back scratchers'
<i>los quitasoles</i>	'the sunshades'
<i>los matafuegos</i>	'the fire extinguishers'
<i>los guardametas</i>	'the goalies'.

The compound nouns of category (1b) [Adj + Noun]<sub>N</sub> are less common. Since adjectives in Spanish ordinarily follow the nouns they describe (and also agree with them in person and number), a reversed order usually indicates a specialized meaning. In the examples below, the alternative feminine suffix is shown in parentheses wherever it is applicable.

Adjective:	Noun:	Compound:
<i>alto(a)</i> 'high, loud'	<i>voz (voces)</i> 'voice'	<i>altavoz (-voces)</i> 'loudspeaker'
<i>salvo(a)</i> 'safe'	<i>conducto(s)</i> 'channel'	<i>salvoconducto(s)</i> 'safe-conduct pass'
<i>blanco(a)</i> 'white'	<i>nieve(s)</i> 'snow'	<i>Blancanieves</i> 'Snow-White'

Compare these with *en voz alta*, 'aloud' and *nieves blancas*, 'white snows'. *El salvoconducto* is the particular document required to ensure safe passage through a restricted area.

Compound nouns in category (1c) [Prep + Noun]<sub>N</sub> take their gender from that of their constituent noun and otherwise fit into the same general pattern so far discussed with regard to their structure. The noun is the object of the preposition.

Preposition:	Noun:	Compound:
<i>ante</i> 'before'	<i>brazo(s)</i> 'arm'	<i>antebrazo(s)</i> 'forearm'
"	<i>ojo(s)</i> 'eye'	<i>anteojo(s)</i> 'spyglass'
		<i>anteojos</i> 'eyeglasses'
<i>para</i> 'for'	<i>agua(s)</i> 'water'	<i>paraguas</i> <sup>2</sup> 'umbrella'
" 'for the purpose of'	<i>caída(s)</i> 'fall'	<i>paracaídas</i> 'parachute'
"	<i>brisa(s)</i> 'breeze'	<i>parabrisas</i> 'windshield'
"	<i>rayo(s)</i> 'thunderbolt'	<i>pararrayos</i> 'lightning rod'
"	<i>choque(s)</i> 'collision'	<i>parachoques</i> 'bumper (auto)'
"	<i>viento(s)</i> 'wind'	<i>paravientos</i> 'windbreak'
<i>sin</i> 'without'	<i>razón(es)</i> 'reason'	<i>sinrazón(es)</i> 'injustice'
"	<i>vergüenza(s)</i> 'shame'	<i>sinvergüenza(s)</i> 'scoundrel, rogue'
"	<i>número(s)</i> 'number'	<i>sinnúmero</i> 'enormous number'
<i>sobre</i> 'over'	<i>todo(-)</i> 'everything'	<i>sobretudo(s)</i> 'overcoat'
" 'above'		
" 'about'	<i>precio(s)</i> 'price'	<i>sobreprecio(s)</i> 'surcharge'

<sup>2</sup> The final vowel of *para* and the initial vowel of *aguas* collapse into one. The same is usually true of *port(a)aviones*, although the orthography does not yet always reflect this.

Compounds formed by combining two nouns, as in category (1d) [Noun + Noun]<sub>N</sub>, are unusual, as might be expected in a language that does not permit one noun to describe another (as English does: *doghouse*, *fire insurance*, *tomato sauce*, *mousetrap*, *music box*, etc.). No consistent relationship exists between the nouns in these cases.

Noun:		Noun:		Compound:	
<i>boca</i>	'mouth'	<i>calle(s)</i>	'street'	<i>bocacalle(s)</i>	'entrance into street'
<i>madre</i>	'mother'	<i>selva(s)</i>	'jungle'	<i>madreselva(s)</i>	'honeysuckle'
<i>mito</i>	'myth'	<i>manía(s)</i>	'obsession'	<i>mitomanía(s)</i>	'habitual telling of lies'
<i>hombre</i>	'man'	<i>rana(s)</i>	'frog'	<i>hombre-rana</i> (but <i>hombres-ranas</i> )	'frogman'

Spanish adjectives are frequently used as noun equivalents, as in 'the one who is Adj'. Examples are *el flaco*, 'the thin one' (male), *la rubia*, 'the blonde' (female), *los valientes*, 'the brave (ones)', and so on. Compound adjectives, therefore, can be said to contribute to the classes of compound nouns with such constructions as [Adj + Adj]<sub>Adj</sub> or [Noun + Adj]<sub>Adj</sub> in which the final (or both) constituents may be noun equivalents. Although these secondary classes of compounds can be derived from them, these constructions are primarily adjectives, and I have listed them as such.

The final category (1e) [Oddities]<sub>N</sub> contains three compound nouns created from whole utterances. These are rare occurrences.

Source:		Compound:	
<i>¡Enhorabuena!</i>	'Well and good!' 'Thank heavens!' 'At the right time!'	<i>la enhorabuena</i>	'congratulations'
<i>¡Haz me reír!</i>	'Make me laugh!'	<i>el hazmerreír</i>	'laughingstock'
<i>¿Qué dirán?</i>	'What will they say?'	<i>el qué dirán</i>	'gossip' 'public opinion'

Most COMPOUND ADJECTIVES in Spanish are formed in a way which parallels the noun phrase, in which the adjective follows the noun it describes and agrees with it in gender and number. Some examples are:

<i>un durazno maduro</i>	'a ripe peach'
<i>zapatillas nuevas</i>	'new slippers'
<i>los cerros lejanos</i>	'the distant hills'
<i>de oro fino</i>	'of pure gold'
<i>una araña pequeñita</i>	'a tiny spider'
<i>la luna reluciente</i>	'the shining moon'.

Compound adjectives, with a few exceptions, have an adjective as their final element which is then inflected for agreement in the usual way. However, in the list of compound adjectives from category (2a) [Noun + Adj]Adj the expected forms \**piernacorto(a)*, \**pelorrojo(a)*, \**barbaespeso(a)*, and so on do not occur, although they would be phonologically acceptable.

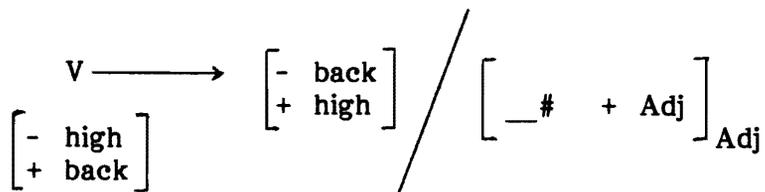
Noun:		Adjective:		Compound:	
<i>pierna</i>	'leg'	<i>corto(a)</i>	'short'	<i>piernicorto(a)</i>	'short-legged'
<i>pelo</i>	'hair'	<i>rojo(a)</i>	'red'	<i>pelirrojo(a)</i>	'red-haired'
<i>barba</i>	'beard'	<i>espeso(a)</i>	'heavy, dense'	<i>barbiespeso(a)</i>	'heavy-bearded'
<i>cabeza</i>	'head'	<i>duro(a)</i>	'hard'	<i>cabeciduro(a)</i> <sup>3</sup>	'stubborn' 'pig-headed'
<i>boca</i>	'mouth'	<i>abierto(a)</i>	'open'	<i>boquiabierto(a)</i>	'open-mouthed'
<i>mano</i>	'hand'	"		<i>maniabierto(a)</i>	'generous'
<i>cara</i>	'face'	<i>acontecido(a)</i>	'having occurred'	<i>cariacontecido(a)</i>	'crestfallen'
<i>ojo</i>	'eye'	<i>negro(a)</i>	'black'	<i>ojinegro(a)</i>	'black-eyed'
<i>punta</i>	'point'	<i>agudo(a)</i>	'sharp'	<i>puntiagudo(a)</i>	'sharp-pointed'
<i>pata</i>	'paw, leg' (of animal)	<i>zambo(a)</i>	'knock-kneed'	<i>patizambo(a)</i>	'bandy-legged'
"		<i>tuerto(a)</i>	'twisted'	<i>patituerto(a)</i>	'crooked-legged'

If these compounds are perceived as noun phrases by native speakers, then an internal gender conflict would arise whenever the compound adjective differed in gender from its noun constituent, as in the following examples:

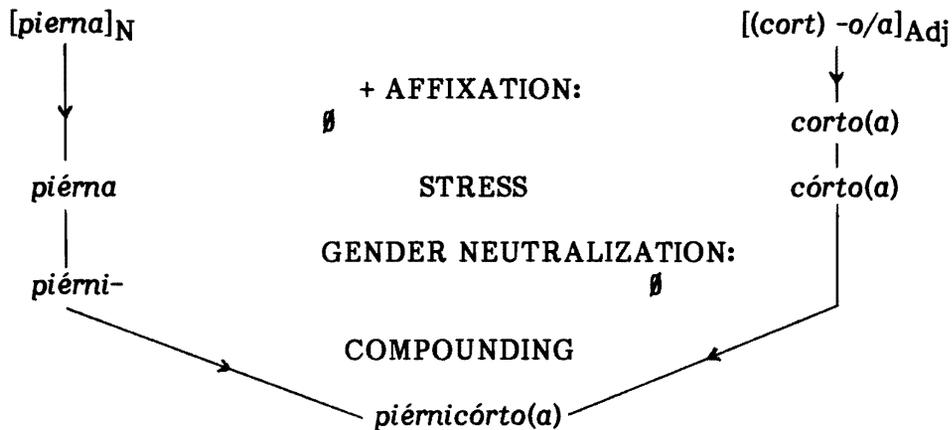
<i>un hombre</i>	* <i>piernacorto</i>	'a short-legged man'
<i>una muchacha</i>	* <i>pelorroja</i>	'a red-haired girl'
<i>un palo</i>	* <i>puntagudo</i>	'a sharp-pointed stick'

This conflict can be resolved by "neutralizing" the gender of the constituent noun in order to permit the resulting compound adjective to be inflected for either gender, as follows:

<sup>3</sup> Orthographical spelling conventions, not phonological changes, are shown in *cabeciduro(a)* and *boquiabierto(a)*: z → c and c → qu before e and i.

**Gender Neutralization Rule:**

A sample derivation is shown for *piernicorto(a)*, 'short-legged'.



It seems probable that Gender Neutralization would take place immediately before Compounding; otherwise no internal gender conflict would arise in half the cases and would result in pairs of compound adjectives such as *piernicorto*/*\*piernacorta*, *\*pelorrojo*/*pelirroja*, *puntiagudo*/*\*puntaguda*, etc.

The compound adjectives of category (2b) [Adj + Adj]<sub>Adj</sub> can be divided into two classes. In the first class, the adjectives are of equal value and their coordinate structure is clearly shown in the incorporation of *y* ([i]), 'and', into the compounding process. Gender Neutralization (applied to the first example) and vowel assimilation rules yield the compound adjectives in the list below:

**Compound Adjectives of Equal Value: 'Adj<sub>1</sub> and Adj<sub>2</sub>'**

Adjective and Adjective:				Compound:		
<i>agrio(a)</i>	'sour'	<i>y</i>	<i>dulce</i>	'sweet'	<i>agridulce</i>	'bittersweet'
<i>verde</i>	'green'	<i>y</i>	<i>negro(a)</i>	'black'	<i>verdinegro(a)</i>	'very dark green'
"		<i>y</i>	<i>blanco(a)</i>	'white'	<i>verdiblanco(a)</i>	'green and white'
"		<i>y</i>	<i>rojo(a)</i>	'red'	<i>verdirrojo(a)</i>	'green and red'
<i>rojo(a)</i>	'red'	<i>y</i>	<i>blanco(a)</i>	'white'	<i>rojiblanco(a)</i>	'red and white'

Compound Adjectives of Unequal Value: 'Adj<sub>1</sub> that is Adj<sub>2</sub>'

Adjective and Adjective:				Compound:	
azul	'blue'	claro(a)	'light'	azul claro	'light blue'
"		marino(a)	'navy'	azul marino	'navy blue'
verde	'green'	oscuro(a)	'dark'	verde oscuro	'dark green'
rosa	'pink'	pálido(a)	'pale'	rosa pálido	'pale pink'

However, the second class of adjectives in this category contains adjectives that are not equal in value; in these compounds, the second constituent describes the first in the same way that the compound as a whole describes the noun and occupies the same relative position with respect to it in the phrase. Moreover, they function as invariable units, i.e., they are not subject to agreement inflection, as in the following examples (Mason: 1967):

<i>ojos azul claro</i>	'light blue eyes'
<i>una gorra verde oscuro</i>	'a dark green cap'
<i>una falda azul marino</i>	'a navy blue skirt'
<i>sábanas rosa pálido</i>	'pale pink sheets'.

The compound adjectives of category (2c) [Adj + Noun]<sub>Adj</sub> are also invariable, as might be expected, since the final constituents are nouns that are not inflected for gender.

Adjective:		Noun:		Compound:	
verde	'green'	mar	'sea'	verdemar	'sea-green'
"		oliva	'olive' (fruit)	verde-oliva	'olive-green'

One unusual case that seems to defy the foregoing discussion involves derivatives of the adjectives *sordo(a)*, 'deaf' and *mudo(a)*, 'mute, dumb'. Noun equivalents are formed in the customary way, as follows:

<i>el sordo</i> (masc.)	'the deaf one'	<i>el mudo</i> (masc.)	'the mute (one)'
<i>la sorda</i> (fem.)		<i>la muda</i> (fem.),	

but the resulting compound forms are:

<i>sordomudo(a)</i>	'deaf-and-dumb'
<i>el/la sordomudo(a)</i>	'the deaf-mute'.

COMPOUND VERBS constructed from free forms in Spanish all have a verb as the second constituent, and the majority fall into category (3a) [Prep + Verb]<sub>v</sub>. In these cases, the object of the preposition is missing from the verb phrase: 'to Verb<sub>Inf</sub> [Prep + ]pp'. Some examples are:

Preposition:		Verb:		Compound:	
<i>ante</i>	before	<i>pagar</i>	'pay'	<i>antepagar</i>	'prepay'
<i>entre</i>	'between'	<i>chocar</i>	'crash'	<i>entrechocar</i>	'collide'
"	'among'	<i>cruzar</i>	'cross'	<i>entrecruzar</i>	'interweave'
<i>sobre</i>	'on', 'over'	<i>cargar</i>	'load'	<i>sobrecargar</i>	'overload'
"	'above'	<i>ponerse</i> (refl.)	'place' (oneself)	<i>sobreponerse</i>	'overcome'
"		<i>vivir</i>	'live'	<i>sobrevivir</i>	'survive'
"		<i>pasar</i>	'pass'	<i>sobrepasar</i>	'excel'
"		<i>salir</i>	'go forth' 'go out'	<i>sobresalir</i>	'stand out' 'surpass'
<i>tras</i>	'behind'	<i>plantar</i>	'plant'	<i>trasplantar</i>	'transplant'
"		<i>tornar</i>	'turn'	<i>trastornar</i>	'upset, turn upside down'

Adjectives are often used as adverbs in Spanish, and although the first constituents in the category (3b) [Adj + Verb]<sub>v</sub> are true adjectives inflected for agreement and having comparative and superlative forms, it is in their adverbial role that they combine with verbs to form compounds; this is hardly surprising, since verbs are commonly described by adverbs. Both *bueno(a)*, 'good' and *malo(a)*, 'bad' are irregular and show stem vowel change and/or loss of suffix when used adverbially (*bien*, 'well' and *mal*, 'badly').

Adjective:		Verb:		Compound:	
<i>bueno(a)</i>	'good'	<i>decir</i>	'say'	<i>bendecir</i>	'bless'
<i>malo(a)</i>	'bad'	<i>decir</i>		<i>maldecir</i>	'curse'
"		<i>criar</i>	'rear'	<i>malcriar</i>	'spoil'
"		<i>parir</i>	'give birth'	<i>malparir</i>	'miscarry'
"		<i>tratar</i>	'treat'	<i>maltratar</i>	'mistreat'
<i>menos</i>	'less'	<i>preciar</i>	'value'	<i>menospreciar</i>	'scorn, despise'

Finally, there is one compound verb in category (3c) [Oddities]<sub>v</sub>, which I have included because of its similarity to the compound nouns in the corresponding category. It is not constructed entirely of free forms; it is a complete utterance with an infinitival suffix:

¡Por Dios! 'Heavens!' 'For God's sake!' + -ear *pordiosear* 'to beg'

A corresponding noun equivalent exists as well which combines the utterance with a nominalizing suffix: *pordiosera(a)*, 'beggar'. Presumably this would create an entry for an "Oddities" category for compound adjectives.

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Examination of compounds constructed of free forms in Spanish provides evidence that they are perceived as phrasal by the native speaker of the language. In the case of compound nouns, the plurality of constituents is generally determined in accordance with the corresponding phrase. In compound adjectives, gender conflict between constituents must be resolved. Certainly compounds constructed from whole utterances essentially without alteration, must be considered phrasal. Finally, in all cases discussed, the stress patterns of the individual constituents are everywhere maintained.

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