

KS2, KS3, KS4

Mastering pronunciation

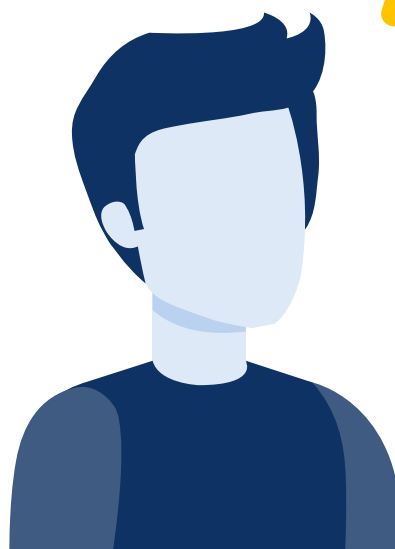
TEACHING
PACK

la chica

loro
lloro

pino
piña

- Phonics activities and games
- Pronunciation in complete sentences and longer texts
- Suitable for key stages 2, 3 and 4



Contents

Introduction	3
10 tips for mastering pronunciation	8
1. Simple vowels	10
2. Consonants	15
3. Blends and stressed syllables	23
4. Additional activities	37
References	73

Teachit sample

Introduction

The phonics activities in this pack offer a manageable and practical starting point for developing students' Spanish pronunciation skills and equipping them with effective strategies to recognise and reproduce different sound–symbol correspondences (SSCs). This pack can be used at key stages 2, 3 and 4. The resources are research- and evidence-based, drawing on:

- *Modern Foreign Languages Pedagogy Review* (Teaching Schools Council)
- AQA examiner reports from GCSE listening papers
- Department for Education revised national MFL curriculum
- Spanish primary school phonics textbooks.

The aim of this pack is to provide straightforward advice on Spanish pronunciation through listening and speaking activities at sound, word, sentence and paragraph level, and to provide engaging activities which encourage students to overcome the embarrassment of speaking Spanish and to be confident and gain enjoyment from communicating in another language.

The teaching of phonics significantly enhances phonological decoding, i.e. the ability to sound out words. This in turn improves students' ability to learn vocabulary autonomously, to spell accurately and to be able to easily spot cognates. The understanding of individual phonemes and how they carry meaning enhances grammar skills. In particular, vowel sounds in Spanish are crucial for the distinction of person, number and tense in verb endings. There is a positive impact across all key language skills, from reading and writing to listening and speaking. A visible improvement in these skills will in turn have a positive impact on motivation and confidence in the acquisition of a new language. If a student understands the sounds of the target language, they greatly increase their ability to communicate effectively with native speakers.

Changes to the MFL curriculum and examiner reports

MFL Pedagogy Review 2016

The *Modern Foreign Languages Pedagogy Review* was published by the Teaching Schools Council in 2016, and it provided key recommendations for changes in the way MFL is taught in schools, with a focus on three cornerstones:

- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Phonics.

The review outlines the importance of learning the phoneme–grapheme or sound–symbol correspondence (SSC) in order to be able to communicate effectively in a new language. Spanish can be challenging for native English speakers owing to the different vowel

system, different stress patterns and the use of accents. The review says that ‘pupils who are not systematically taught the phoneme–grapheme correspondences of their new language very often read and speak using the English system they already know, leading to multiple errors in communication and understanding’ (*MFL Pedagogy Review*, 2016, p.12).

The review concludes that ‘direct and systematic teaching of phonics in the new language is a more reliable method for assuring accurate pronunciation and spelling’ but that explicit phonics teaching is ‘still relatively rare’ in schools (*MFL Pedagogy Review*, 2016, p.12). One key recommendation made by the review is that ‘the phonics component of language courses is concentrated in the early stages, certainly within the first year, so that incorrect pronunciation habits do not become embedded’ and ‘that a pupil can pronounce most words accurately from the written form, including those not yet explicitly taught; and that they can produce a potentially accurate spelling of new words’ (*MFL Pedagogy Review*, 2016, p.12).

Revised national curriculum 2022

In January 2022, the Department for Education published the revised national curriculum for 2024, including the new GCSE subject content for Spanish. The report provides a list of ‘key differences in sound–spelling correspondences between Spanish and English which students will need to learn at GCSE to be able to read out loud and transcribe with sufficient accuracy at this level’. It states that ‘students will be expected to pronounce words with stress patterns that allow their speech to be clear and comprehensible’ (DfE, 2022, pp.18–19).

Examiner reports

Examiner reports highlight common errors made by students which could be addressed by explicit phonics teaching. For example, the AQA GCSE Spanish examiner report in June 2019 notes that in the Foundation speaking paper the main issue with conveying the Spanish for a type of film was in the pronunciation of the key word, especially with *acción* and *horror*. In a section of the Higher tier speaking paper, the main problem was the pronunciation of *hijos*, which was sometimes so poor that no marks could be awarded, even though the rest of the question was answered correctly. These common errors could easily be eliminated by teaching the correct pronunciation of the consonants in Spanish.

Approaches to teaching Spanish phonics

Associating sounds with gestures

Using visual-auditory-kinaesthetic (VAK) learning styles can be an effective approach to mastering pronunciation. Dr Rachel Hawkes (2014) says: ‘The words are learnt in a multi-layered way through seeing a vivid image, hearing and repeating the sound of the word and doing an accompanying gesture. The three strands of this VAK approach strengthen memory, making the knowledge robust and secure enough for easy retrieval at any time, and more importantly, for application to new words in new contexts.’

In this pack, each SSC is associated with a word, an image and a gesture as a starting point for teaching the Spanish sound. The words, images and gestures are provided throughout the activities, as well as being brought together in printable posters/handouts.

The most effective way of using the VAK posters in this resource is to ask the students to stand up and repeat the SSC and word they hear while carrying out the associated gesture. Practising the sounds and gestures as a matter of routine in the classroom will reinforce retention of the sounds in the long-term memory.

Phonics in Spanish primary schools

The first year of formal instruction in reading and phonics in Spanish primary schools is in the class known as Educación Primaria, to children of six and seven years old. The sequence of teaching usually begins with the simple vowel sounds, moving into consonants, and then the more complex diphthongs, consonants and blended sounds.

Essentially, they begin with words such as **la** and **el** [the], and finish with words such as **granjero** [farmer]. It is advised that teachers using this pack also begin with the simple vowels and consonants before tackling the more complex sounds in the third PowerPoint of blended sounds.

Spanish schools often use a method of chanting groupings of letters, which can be easily implemented in teaching phonics to native English speakers.

For example, in the early stages of the Spanish primary education textbook *Micho 1* (2005) students chant series of letters such as these:

Lo – li – la – lu – le

Ola – leo – lola – lila

Later, the sequences become more complex, such as these guttural sounds:

Jaula – ojo – jota – ajo – joya – jinete

How this pack is structured

The pack is divided into four sections:

1. Simple vowels
2. Consonants
3. Blends and stressed syllables
4. Additional activities

This document contains summaries of the four accompanying PowerPoints, including posters, worksheets and vocabulary cards which can be printed for students as handouts.

The activities PowerPoint provides additional words, sentences (including tongue-twisters) and longer texts for students to practise applying and deepening their knowledge of Spanish phonics. All the resources can be easily adapted and used flexibly throughout lessons.

Sound–symbol correspondences in this pack

The SSCs in this pack are those listed by the Department for Education (2022, pp.18–19) as presenting the greatest challenge for students of Spanish. In the three SSC PowerPoints, they are grouped as follows:

Simple vowels

1. [a]
2. [e]
3. [i]
4. [o]
5. [u]

Consonants

1. [ll]
2. [ch]
3. [z]
4. [j]
5. [ñ]
6. [v]
7. [-r-] [-r] or [soft r]
8. [rr] [r-] [-r-] or [hard r]
9. silent [h]

Blends and stressed syllables

1. [ca, co, cu]
2. [ce, ci]
3. [ch] (recap of content from 'Consonants' PowerPoint)
4. [que, qui]
5. [ga, go, gu]
6. [ge, gi]
7. [gue, gui]
8. [güe, güi]
9. Stressed syllables: general information
10. Stressed syllables: rule 1 – stress on penultimate syllable
11. Stressed syllables: exceptions to rule 1 (tilde)
12. Stressed syllables: rule 2 – stress on last syllable
13. Stressed syllables: exceptions to rule 2 (tilde)

For each SSC covered in the pack, instruction is sequenced as follows:

- a. Recognising the sounds
- b. Producing the sounds in familiar words
- c. Recognising and producing the sounds in unfamiliar words
- d. Recognising and producing the sounds in sentences and discourse

Native speakers

Two native speakers have been used throughout the PowerPoints to provide authentic Spanish voices, enabling students to listen to and copy Spanish pronunciation correctly. The female speaker is from the Canary Islands (with a pronunciation similar to that in Latin America) and the male speaker is from mainland Spain.

Vocabulary

As this pack is not aimed at one specific year group, no assumptions are made concerning vocabulary knowledge. Therefore, English translations are provided throughout the resources to maximise understanding and assist in crucial vocabulary acquisition.

While the pack contains a large amount of commonly used vocabulary, less common vocabulary is also used as a tool to focus students' attention on sounds in words they do not already know how to spell.

Words from the pack grouped by theme/topic are provided as cut-out cards on pp.58–68 of the activities section. The following themes/topics are included:

- Natural world
- Food and drink
- Home
- Town, region and country
- Describing people
- Clothes and accessories
- Travel and tourism
- School and sports.

The pack also contains a large selection of cognates, which are a useful tool to highlight the contrasting sounds in Spanish and English through words with similar or identical spellings.

Teaching notes

Each slide within the four PowerPoints comes with a learning objective, instructions and audio transcript within the teaching notes, along with gestures where relevant.

About the author

The PowerPoints for *Mastering pronunciation – Spanish* were written for Teachit by Beatriz Sánchez. The introduction and tips, and the activity types, were adapted from *Mastering pronunciation – French*, written by Louise Bibbey.

Beatriz holds a PGCE in secondary MFL (Spanish) and an MA in English studies. She lived in the UK for nine years, where she taught GCSE and A-level Spanish in secondary schools in the South West of England and was head of the Spanish department. She has recently returned to the South of Spain, where she continues her passion for educating children about languages.



Simple vowels: Sounds and gestures

Mastering pronunciation

casa

[a]



[house]

tele

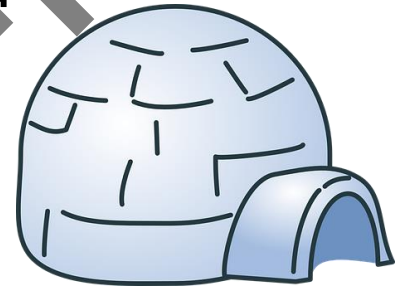
[e]



[TV]

iglú

[i]



[igloo]

ojo

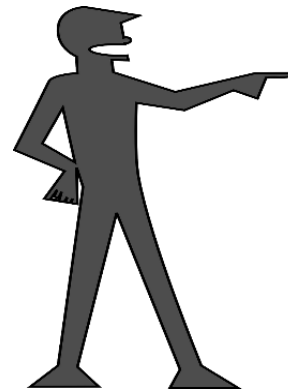
[o]



[eye]

tú

[u]



[you]

[a] Pronunciation rules

Mastering
pronunciation

casa

[a]



[house]

The **[a]** in Spanish sounds like the **[a]** in the English word **apple**.

Keep the sound towards the front of the mouth.
The sound should be short and crisp.

Listen and repeat:

cama

[a]



[bed]

gata

[a]



[cat]

saltar

[a]



[to jump]

amar

[a]



[to love]

cantar

[a]



[to sing]

campana

[a]



[bell]

manzana

[a]



[apple]

alas

[a]



[wings]

[a] Read aloud, then check

Mastering
pronunciation

▶ **Esta es la cama de la gata.**
[This is the cat's bed.]



▶ **La chica salta en la casa.**
[The girl jumps in the house.]



▶ **La mamá canta a su gata.**
[The mum sings to her cat.]



▶ **La chica come una manzana roja.**
[The girl eats a red apple.]



▶ **La tapa con pan es sabrosa.**
[The tapa with bread is tasty.]



Las palabras invariables 1

Mastering
pronunciation

hacia

[towards]

así

[in this way]

entonces

[so]

después

[after]

suficiente

[enough]

hoy

[today]

también

[also]

antes

[before]

con

[with]

si

[if]

bien

[well]

pronto

[soon]

cómo

[how?]

sobre

[about]

sin embargo

[however]

desde

[from]

quizás

[maybe]

como

[like]

tampoco

[neither]

contra

[against]

primero

[firstly]

en

[in]

ya

[already]

mañana

[tomorrow]



En España, mi jornada escolar empieza a las ocho de la mañana y termina a las tres de la tarde. Vamos al instituto desde los once años hasta los dieciocho. Después de la segunda clase tenemos un recreo de veinte minutos para descansar y tomar algo de comer, como un bocadillo. En el instituto, los idiomas que estudiamos son inglés, francés y alemán. También estudiamos historia, geografía, matemáticas, literatura y ciencias. En el instituto, hacemos deportes como balonmano, fútbol, baloncesto, atletismo, bádminton y gimnasia.

