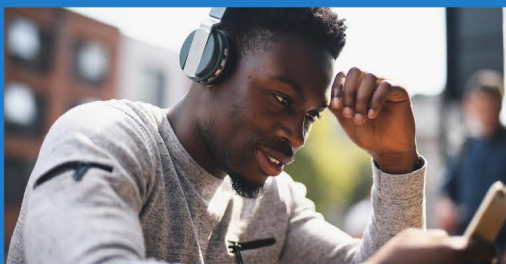




Spanish for Perfectionists

Guide for Users

Free Sample



Elizabeth Coelho
Gema Sánchez Benítez

Spanish for Perfectionists: Guide for Users

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First of All

This guide is an essential supplement to our e-books in the series [Spanish for Perfectionists](#). If you have worked with some of our video-lessons before, you already know our approach. Maybe you have even read this guide before. Nevertheless, we suggest that you skim through it, in English or Spanish, to refresh your memory of some important recommendations, such as Spaced Repetition, reading aloud in time with the audio, or getting the most out of the Quizlet activities. Of course, if you feel really confident, just skip directly to the lessons themselves, which are published separately.

If you are new here, welcome! In this guide you will learn not only how to get the most out of all the learning material in *Spanish for Perfectionists*, but also how to use various strategies to boost your learning of Spanish— or any other language.

Introduction

Welcome to *Spanish for Perfectionists*

Language learning is not easy, nor is it quick. Don't believe claims that you can be fluent in thirty days! But learning a language can be fun. With the right materials, and your motivation, dedication, and effort, we believe you can enjoy learning Spanish and see positive results.

Are the lessons in *Real Spanish for Perfectionists* right for you?

Have you studied Spanish, recently or in the past? Maybe you have put in a lot of effort, taking courses and studying alone online, or travelling abroad to take intensive courses in Spanish-speaking countries. Maybe you have reached quite a high level of proficiency in vocabulary and grammar, and can follow TV shows and movies (as long as they are subtitled, perhaps, and as long as the language is not too colloquial). You can probably read various types of text, in print or online (as long as you have access to a dictionary). But do you still feel anxious when participating in real conversations with native speakers? Do you wish they would just slow down a bit so you could recognize each word? Do you sometimes feel as if you are drowning in a river of speech? Or maybe you do recognize most of the words but still don't understand, because many words have different meanings depending on how they are used. ¡*Qué fastidio!* (What a pain, nuisance, etc.)

If this is you, the video-lessons and activities in *Spanish for Perfectionists* (plus your dedication and hard work) will help you to:

- improve your understanding of spoken language;
- enhance your fluency;
- expand your vocabulary;
- learn a lot of colloquial expressions;
- tune your ear to the sounds of Spanish and refine your pronunciation;
- learn some useful strategies to boost your learning of Spanish— or any other language.

Of course, you won't get these results by viewing and reading once or even twice through the lessons. That would be like paying for a gym membership, dropping in for a class now and then, and expecting great results. You have to do the work. Later in this Introduction we explain what we mean by “doing the work”. First, though, let's take a look at the components of each lesson.

What's included in each e-book?

Each ebook in the *Spanish for Perfectionists* series consists of a set of five video-lessons based on a variety of topics, as well as associated study materials and online activities. The lessons are independent of each other, so you can do them in any order. And

although the ebooks are numbered in order of publication, you can choose to use them in any order as well.

Our focus at Real Spanish is on colloquial language, spoken at normal native-speaker speed. See [More Learning Resources from Real Spanish](#) for information about our other publications for people who are serious about improving their Spanish.

What's in each lesson?

Each lesson consists of the following materials:

- **A link to a video in Spanish.** There are no subtitles, but key words and phrases appear on the screen, along with an English translation or explanation.
- **A complete transcription in Spanish.** Key words and phrases are highlighted and linked to English translations or explanations.
- **Vocabulary notes and activities.** Key words and phrases, and their English translations or explanations, are listed in the order they appear in the transcription. There is also a link to some interactive practice activities.
- **Grammar notes.** Grammar points that arise in the video are explained in Spanish and English.
- **Test yourself.** These online activities help you to evaluate your own learning.

How long should I spend on each lesson?

Language learning is not a race. It has taken all your life to reach the level you now have in your first language. We never stop developing our skills in our first language, especially if we read a lot and follow current affairs. Learning a second or additional language also takes time, lots of opportunities for interaction, and plenty of practice and repetition. For best results with Spanish for Perfectionists, follow the sequence suggested in [Doing the work](#) (below). Each lesson will take 3-4 hours, depending on how much repetition you do (the more the better!).

The value of repetition

One of our mottos at Real Spanish is: Effective language learning requires repetition, repetition, and more repetition. In fact, studies have shown that a learning strategy known as Spaced Repetition gives excellent results, especially in language learning. With the vocabulary activities in this e-book, you can familiarise yourself with this method and apply it to all the learning activities in these lessons, not in a single learning session but several times, spaced out over a period of several days and weeks. For example, you can listen to and repeat the pronunciation examples in the vocabulary activities, listen to the audio of the video while reading the transcription, listen and repeat parts of the audio without the transcription, or memorise a few lines and reciting in chorus with the audio. The results will show!

To learn how Spaced Repetition works, see [Spaced Repetition: A Guide to the Technique](#).

The Pomodoro Technique



Have you heard of the Pomodoro Technique? It's a way of managing your study time more effectively. It's very simple: you break up study sessions into short intervals of intensive study followed by a short break. The technique is called "pomodoro" because Francesco Cirillo, the Italian student who developed it, used a kitchen timer shaped like a tomato —*pomodoro* in Italian— to time his study sessions with 25 minutes of intensive study and a five-minute break. This is long enough for a bathroom break or to make a cup of coffee and bring it back to your desk, but not so long as to lose your focus and get distracted. The use of a timer creates some pressure and encourages you to concentrate during study sessions. After four 25-minute sessions, you take a longer break of about half an hour. That's it!

The technique was originally applied to exam preparation, but is now used more generally to improve productivity. You can use it very effectively to study vocabulary or grammar, or to focus during Quizlet sessions. Since you are in charge of your own learning and not preparing for an exam, you can be more relaxed, doing a couple of sessions at a time and spacing more sessions out over the week(s) to come, using Spaced Repetition as suggested above. You can get more detailed information in this article: “The Pomodoro Technique – work your way to an A, one Pomodoro session at a time.” www.bcu.ac.uk/exams-and-revision/time-management-tips/pomodoro-technique.

Intensive and extensive learning

Our approach in Spanish for Perfectionists is intensive. Intensive language learning involves the in-depth study of a short text or oral language sample, at a level higher than your independent level of comprehension. The aim is for you to end up understanding every word and expression, without visual or textual support. Normally the guidance of a teacher or an online course is needed for success in intensive learning.

It’s a good idea to balance your intensive study with activities for extensive learning, where you are exposed to larger quantities of less challenging language, without paying too much attention to detail but focusing on getting the main idea, going with the flow of the conversation or text. Normally you won’t need the guidance of a teacher or an online course to find opportunities for this kind of learning... just your enthusiasm and initiative!

See our blog entries on extensive reading and language exchanges:

[«¡Ponte las pilas!»](#): Improve your vocabulary by reading extensively.

[How to get to the next level in Spanish](#): Complement your online Spanish courses with language exchanges.

Fluency and accuracy

Perhaps you are one of those learners who are confident and fluent, plunging in and communicating quite successfully even as a beginner. You are focused on communication rather than accuracy, and although you may make lots of mistakes, in a social setting you and the people you interact with barely notice it. You speak confidently and at a natural speed, barely thinking about grammar or word choice.



However, in a more formal situation, such as an interview or a meeting at work, you may be more aware of your mistakes. In such settings, people are more likely to make judgements on the basis of “correctness” in grammar and word choice.



Or maybe you are more hesitant, focussing on getting the grammar correct and building up your vocabulary. You like to prepare ahead, thinking about what you are going to say and how. Maybe you prepare a few sentences on different topics so you can jump in when you feel confident.



Unfortunately, you sometimes get left behind in a conversation because you are still thinking about the correct grammar while everyone else has moved on. Or the topics you prepared never came up!



Most people tend to be more strongly orientated towards fluency or accuracy; however, balancing the two is crucial for effective communication in variety of contexts. These strategies can help:

Errors: How you handle errors is key. Try to expect and accept errors as a natural part of the language learning journey. Don't stop to self-correct all the time, but do pay attention to subtle feedback; for example, if you say "Me gusta esta color", and someone says "¿Este?", that's a spontaneous little grammar lesson right there! Don't get flustered, just tuck it away, ready for next time. Mistakes are opportunities for growth and learning. On the other hand, there are times when a bit of preplanning or rehearsal can really make a difference.

Grammar and Vocabulary: Regular practice with grammar and vocabulary exercises can help improve accuracy in language usage. Just a few minutes a day can make all the difference. A platform such as [Kwiziq](#) can identify your level and email you

regular short lessons and practice sessions based on your specific weaknesses.

Pronunciation Practice: Repeat listening to an audio sample, focussing on the pronunciation of specific sounds such as -r and -rr, or on the intonation (the rise and fall of pitch over a word or sentence) or stress (the emphasis of specific syllables in a word or sentence) will help tune your ear to the sound system of the language. It's also extremely helpful to imitate native speakers by reading along with the audio and then rehearsing a sentence or two to record and compare with the audio.

Speaking Speed: Slow down a bit! In real conversation, speaking at a slightly slower pace can assist in avoiding mistakes and formulating accurate sentences. You won't sound stupid, you'll sound wise and thoughtful! People generally make a lot of allowances for language learners if they are really interested in what you have to say.

Conversation Practice: Engaging in regular conversations with native speakers or language partners can boost fluency by encouraging spontaneous speech. See our [blog entry on language exchanges](#) for some suggestions on how to set yourself up for success with a language partner.

Storytelling and Role-playing: Practicing storytelling and role-playing scenarios can improve your fluency and help you think on their feet. Think of some anecdotes you like to use in conversations (e.g., an embarrassing moment, a film I saw recently, what I like most about Spain/Argentina/ Mexico, etc.), try them out on a Spanish speaker (preferably a teacher) and get feedback on your accuracy... and then practise, practise, practise.

Immersion in the target language and exposure to real-life contexts are essential for fluency and accuracy. If you can, take a study vacation in a country where your target language is spoken. Watching movies, reading books, and interacting with native speakers will also help. See our [blog entry on extensive reading](#) for some ideas on how to choose reading material.

Doing the work: how to use the materials in *Spanish for Perfectionists*

You may be tempted to skip these instructions and go straight to a lesson. If you do, you may “get through” the material in under half an hour... but you won’t be doing the work. And you may remember little of the lesson weeks or months from now. Please put in the time and the effort, and repeat steps as we recommend, and you will get the most out of your investment in this book and the related videos. It’s worth the effort!

How to use the video

The videos in our lessons are short and engaging, packed with linguistic and cultural information, and suitable for adults aged 18+. The goal is for you to end up understanding the audio track, without visual input and without the transcription, recognizing and understanding every single word and sentence.

Our approach is intensive. You’ll be guided in an in-depth analysis of the video, focusing on the vocabulary, expressions, and grammar points that arise in the video, as well as relevant

cultural information. You'll view the video several times, in different ways, according to your preference, in various stages of the lesson. Some people like to dive in and view the video first, without looking at the other materials. Others prefer to start by reading the transcription, or the vocabulary notes, in preparation for the video.



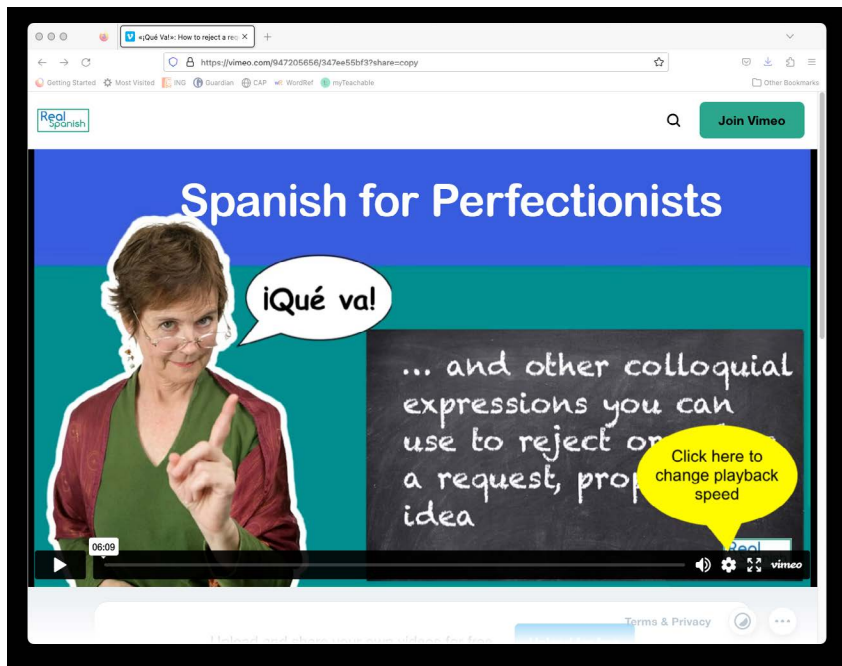
You'll view the video several times, in different ways

The video doesn't have subtitles. All the voiceover and explanations appear on the screen, and the transcription provides the complete narration of the video.

You can also use some playback options to help you, such as rewinding 5 or 10 seconds so you can hear a particular word or phrase again. If you are viewing on a web browser, just hit the right and left arrow keys on your keyboard to go forward

or back. If you are viewing in the mobile app, tap the screen to bring up the controls.

Slowing down the playback speed to 75% of normal is also helpful when you are watching the video for the first time. On a web browser you can find the speed control at the bottom right of the screen. In the mobile app, tap the screen and then on the three dots at top right.



You can adjust playback speed in your web browser...



... or in the mobile app

How to use the transcription

Recommendation: For the best reading experience, **deselect** Justification and Auto-hyphenation in the settings on your reading app.

This transcription is the exact text of the video script. Key words and phrases in **bold** are linked to English translations or explanations. Clicking on the number beside the word or phrase will take you to the explanation, either in the lesson endnotes or in a popup window, depending on the device or reading app you are using. To go back to where you were reading, click on the number in the endnotes again, or on the X in the popup. Don't try to memorise the vocabulary now; you can study it in depth later on, in the vocabulary notes for the lesson.

Read the transcription before viewing the video if you like, but always read it afterwards as you listen to the audio, several times. As you listen, pay attention to intonation, phrasing, pacing, and the individual sounds of Spanish.

Then you can choose a sentence or two to read aloud in time with the narrator or one of the other speakers, imitating him or her as closely as you can. Later you can record yourself and compare your speech with the narrator's. The following procedure works well:

- Listen and repeat several times, imitating the narrator as closely as possible.
- When you are ready, record yourself.
- Listen to the narrator again and immediately listen to yourself.
- Repeat until you are satisfied that your pronunciation is closer to the narrator's. Doing this several times over a period of several days—and several times more over the next few weeks—will help tune your ear to Spanish and make your own speech easier to understand. It's unlikely that adults who start learning a language after puberty will end up with a native-speaker accent, but with persistence you can sound more natural and less hesitant, feel more confident, speak more fluently and, above all, be understood.

How to use the vocabulary notes and activities

We have listed key words and phrases that appear in the video and the transcription. Suggestions:

- To make the task more manageable, study the list in groups of 5-10 words or phrases at a time, using the Pomodoro technique.
- When you are ready, follow the link to the interactive exercises for the specific lesson to practise the vocabulary and expressions highlighted in the list. Note: you will need to [sign up](#) (free) on Quizlet to access the activities.
- Then you can choose among several different activities (Flashcards, Learn, Test and Match). We recommend that you start with Flashcards, but you can choose the ones you prefer.
- You can click on the symbol to hear and repeat the pronunciation.
- These activities allow a lot of customization: for example, in Flashcards, you can choose to view the Spanish first and then flip the card to view the English, or vice-versa. In Test mode you can choose the type of questions you want to answer, such as multiple choice or true-false. Try all of them to see which suits you best. You also have the option of Spaced Repetition, which will remind you when you should repeat an activity in order to consolidate your learning and will also keep track of your long-term memory gains. To learn how to use Spaced Repetition with Quizlet Flashcards, see [Study smarter with spaced repetition](#). Spend some time becoming familiar with this powerful learning tool— you'll be glad you did!

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¡Qué va! Actividad 1

This is "flashcards" mode

Click to hear the pronunciation

Click the card to flip it and see the English word or phrase. Click the arrow below to move to the next card.

rechazar

This is "match" mode

el desprecio	ceñido, ceñida	scorn, contempt	tight
rechazar	baptized	bautizado, bautizada	to reject
proposal	la propuesta	la gaita	bagpipes

¡Qué va! Actividad 1

This activity is in "learn" mode

Término 🔊

← click to hear the pronunciation

rechazar

Selecciona la definición correcta

1 proposal

2 to contradict

3 bagpipes

4 to reject

0 / 13

¡Qué va! Actividad 1

This is "test" mode with the true/false option

Definition 🔊

pasárselo bien

Term 🔊

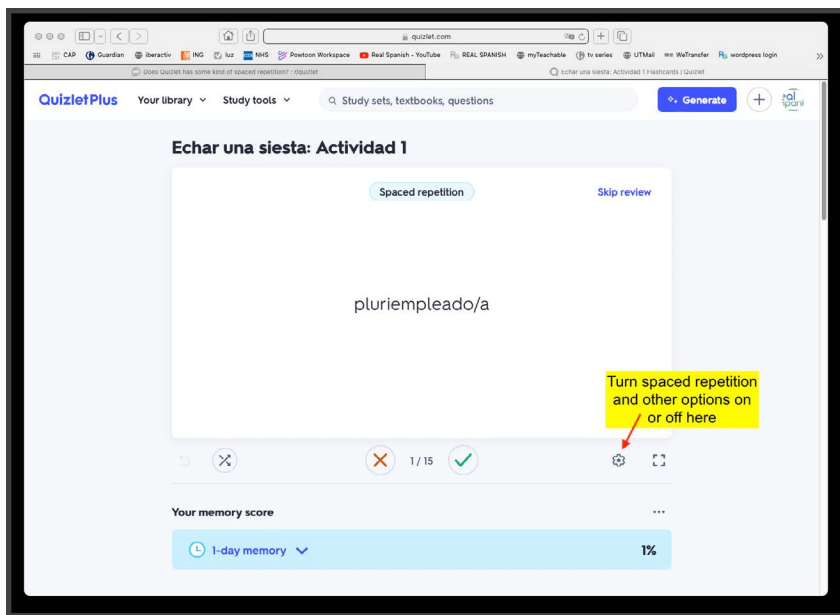
put on, wear

1 of 13

Choose the answer

True

False



Watch out!

The software knows only one answer, even though others may be possible. To conform with the software design, follow these guidelines:

- When typing a word or phrase, type it exactly as it appears in Quizlet (e.g., if the word is «solicitud», don't type «la solicitud»; if the word is “pass”, don't type “to pass”).
- Remember that the words and phrases in brackets are not part of the answer. They are offered as hints or alternative meanings.
- Use accents, upper case letters and punctuation where required. For example, an exclamation like *¡Eres la leche!*

requires two exclamation marks and a capital letter to mark a new sentence or utterance. A word or expression that usually occurs at the beginning of a sentence, such as *En fin* (indicating the end of a conversation or a change of topic), usually requires a capital letter on the first word. Memorise words and expressions just as listed in Quizlet. Keep in mind that the activities are in British English (for example, “neighbour”, not “neighbor”).

- Avoid adding a space at the end of an answer.

How to use the grammar notes

In each lesson we have selected one or two grammar points that came up in the video. The notes are available in Spanish and English. Check back in the video and/or the transcription to see or hear the grammar in context. Study the notes until you feel you have command of the featured grammar point(s).



Study the notes until you feel you have command of the featured grammar point(s).

How to use the test activities

Follow the link to Educaplay in each lesson to access these activities.

These activities may include true/false, multiple choice, matching, or crosswords to help you assess your comprehension and your knowledge of the vocabulary, expressions and grammar points highlighted in the lesson. Repeat if necessary until you are satisfied with your performance, and try again in a week or two, and maybe a month or two after that, to make sure your learning is consolidated in long-term memory.

¡Qué va! - actividad 1

¿Cuál de estas oraciones **no** es correcta?

This is multiple choice. Read the question carefully!

A ¡Qué coche ni qué niño muerto!

B ¡Por qué el libro ni qué gaitas!

C ¡Ni lo sueñes!

D ¡Ni hablar!

¡Qué va! - actividad 2

Este sábado voy a ir a un concierto con mi amiga. - ¡Ni lo _____! Ya sabes que estás castigada y no puedes salir.

"Llena el espacio en blanco. ¡No olvides la gramática!"

sueñes

Watch out!

- For write-in answers, sometimes you need to think about the form of a word: gender, verb tense, singular/plural, etc.
- Don't forget the accents and upper-case letters where necessary.
- Don't add a space at the end of an answer.

Goodbye!

We hope this guide will help you not only to get most out of the lesson materials in *Spanish for Perfectionists*, but also to develop some effective language-learning strategies.

We have published this guide separately from the lessons to avoid unnecessary repetition of the same content in each e-book in the *Spanish for Perfectionists* series. You need to read it only once— although you might review some sections from time to time.

So go ahead, dive in and enjoy your first lesson! Remember you can do the lessons and use the e-books in any order. Meanwhile we continue producing more e-books in the series. We hope you enjoy improving your Spanish with us!

If you found the suggestions in this Guide useful, please consider [dropping us a review](#). It takes less than a minute and helps other potential readers to find our materials.

Best wishes,

Elizabeth and Gema.

Special Offer!

If you enjoyed your sample lesson, you'll love our courses!

- First, view the courses. You can choose to view the page in [English](#) or [Spanish](#). If you are using a mobile phone or a tablet, you can scan the QR code below.
- To make sure these courses are right for you, try the sample lesson, if you haven't already done so.
- Choose the course you want and click on *Add to Cart*. You will end up on the checkout page.
- Type or copy and paste this code into the box indicated on the course checkout page: **EBOOK50**.
- Complete checkout and the discount will be applied automatically.

Note: The coupon code is for one use only.



More Learning Resources from Real Spanish

Check us out on [Real Spanish](#) for updates on new books in this series. You'll also find information about our online Spanish courses, as well as free sample lessons.

Take a look at our [blog](#) for entries on Spanish language, Hispanic culture, and tips for learning Spanish.

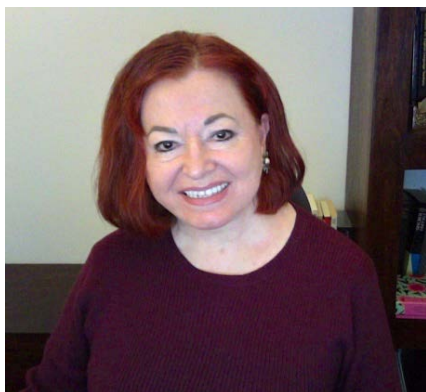
Subscribe to our [YouTube channel](#) for free short videos on various aspects of Spanish: interesting expressions, useful vocabulary, tricky grammar points, and the influence of history and culture on the Spanish language.

Participate in our [YouTube community](#). You can take part in surveys, read informative 1-minute posts about Spanish, and tell us about your own experiences and adventures in learning Spanish!

Try one of our one-to-one Spanish lessons online. [Reserve your free sample lesson now](#) and kick your Spanish up a notch!

[Get in touch](#) with your questions, comments and suggestions.
We'd love to hear from you!

About the Authors



Elizabeth Coelho has worked as a teacher of English as a Second Language to newcomers from other countries in secondary schools and adult programs in the UK and Canada, and as a teacher of English as a Foreign Language in Bulgaria and Spain. She has also worked in teacher education with a focus on language teaching, and has travelled to various countries, including Spain, to give workshops and seminars to teachers. She is also a committed student of Spanish.

Now living in Spain, Elizabeth launched her latest project, [Real Spanish](#), for students like her “who are serious about improving their Spanish”, drawing on her experiences as both a language teacher and a language learner. Realizing that she needed to collaborate with a teacher of Spanish, she was fortunate enough to find Gema, and they work as a team on all aspects of Real Spanish. *Spanish for Perfectionists* is their latest venture.



Gema Sánchez Benítez is Spanish but lives in England, although she also spends a lot of time in Spain. She has been dedicated to teaching Spanish for many years. She has worked as a Lecturer of Spanish at universities in countries such as China and India, as well as in a secondary school in England. The last ten years she has focused on online teaching, via video conferencing. That's how she met Elizabeth, who proposed the collaboration at Real Spanish.

The main objective of Real Spanish is to teach modern Spanish that is spoken in real life, not in the material found in books. Gema says that most of her students feel that they have spent many hours studying Spanish and, even so, they are not able to understand native speakers well. Many ask what they can do to improve their oral expression and comprehension, because they are tired of typical and repetitive teaching materials. She believes that the materials produced by Real Spanish help many students learn in a more entertaining way with contemporary and very varied topics.