

# Intermediate Spanish: Understanding spoken Spanish



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## Introduction

Each section of this free course, *Intermediate Spanish: Understanding spoken Spanish*, will help you develop an understanding of spoken Spanish through watching video portraits of six people talking at a natural pace about themselves and their lives. Using videos for language improvement is powerfully motivating because as well as hearing people talk, you pick up cultural clues and body language, all in authentic scenarios which make language learning meaningful.

The more you watch and listen to Spanish in this way, the more you will understand. As you start, just relax and enjoy the sound of the language with its range of accents. Simply being able to recognise from the intonation, for example, that a question has been asked is an important step towards understanding natural language.

The video clips you will watch in this course are all authentic, that is, they are unscripted and spontaneous. They show people from Spain or Spanish-speaking countries talking about themselves at normal speed.

## Strategies for understanding video resources

You may not be aware of this, but when you watch a video or movie in your mother tongue, you are constantly using various strategies to help you make sense of what you are seeing. This course will enable you to recognise the strategies you already use in interpreting spoken language, and will help you adapt them so you can understand everyday speech in Spanish through the medium of videos. The language level used in this course corresponds to B1 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (COE).

These are some key strategies you will explore through the course:

- Predicting content
- Using knowledge of your own language
- Using cultural knowledge
- Using subtitles
- Coping with unfamiliar language
- Deducing meaning

This OpenLearn course is an adapted extract from the Open University course [L116 Spanish Studies 1: language and culture of the Spanish-speaking world](#).

# Learning Outcomes

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- develop strategies for understanding video resources in Spanish
- understand Spanish spoken at natural speed
- understand and give personal information in Spanish
- use knowledge of other languages and cultures to decode what is heard in Spanish.

# 1 Introducing the course

Before you start the course, watch the following video which gives useful hints and tips when trying to improve your understanding of spoken Spanish.

Video content is not available in this format.



## 2 Predicting content

The video clips in this course are not scripted; they include language which the people we interviewed used naturally. The materials include vocabulary and grammar you may not fully understand. Even this, however, is an important part of the process of learning a new language. It is likely that you understand some of what you are seeing and hearing to begin with, and that you can build on this one step at a time. Some language courses script audio visual materials and focus on the vocabulary and grammar being taught at that moment. This is useful for learning to reinforce expressions and phrases, but authentic materials prepare the learner for hearing Spanish in real life.

Being able to predict what a speaker might say will help you listen out for language you are familiar with. Anticipating what you might hear prepares you to identify individual words or details such as names or places.

### 2.1 Listening to introductions

In this section, you are going to practise listening out for people's personal details by anticipating what people might say when introducing themselves.



Figure 1 Introductions

#### Actividad 1

Before you watch a series of videos in the next activity, choose three aspects from the following list that you would mention to introduce yourself and write them down in the box.

Edad  
Nacionalidad  
Lugar de origen  
Nombre  
Profesión  
Lugar de residencia

*Provide your answer...*

#### Answer

Any of these types of information could be used by someone providing basic information about themselves so in situations such as introductions to other people you need to get ready to listen to relevant language in those areas.

## Actividad 2

Which expressions would you expect to hear when someone introduces themselves? Match the expressions with the different categories of information.

### Ejemplo

Edad → Tengo... años

Tengo... años

Soy...

Nací en...

Me llamo...

Trabajo de/en...

Vivo en...

Match each of the items above to an item below.

Edad

Nacionalidad

Lugar de origen

Nombre

Profesión

Lugar de residencia

### Feedback

Lugar de origen → Nací en... ('Soy de...' is another way to express origin)

Nombre → Me llamo... ('Mi nombre es...' is another way to express your name)

Profesión → Trabajo de/en... ('Soy ...' is another way to express profession)

## Actividad 3

Now listen to the six speakers in the video below, and complete the following table with the information they provide about themselves.



Video content is not available in this format.



Nombre	Edad	Lugar de origen (país)	Lugar de residencia
Manuel Rivero	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>	
Paloma Zancajo	50 años	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>
Celia Sánchez Ramos	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>	Zaragoza	
Antonio Feal Dopico	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>	
Amalia Schubert Arévalo (s)	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>	
Andrés Ponga Colina	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>

**Answer**

Nombre	Edad	Lugar de origen (país)	Lugar de residencia
Manuel Rivero	55 años	Santander (en el norte de España)	
Paloma Zancajo	50 años	Madrid	Madrid
Celia Sánchez Ramos	56 años	Zaragoza (noroeste de España)	
Antonio Feal Dopico	64 años	La Coruña (España)	
Amalia Schubert Arévalo(s)	29 años	Santa Rosa del Aguaray	
Andrés Ponga Colina	34 años	Santander, (capital de Cantabria)	Ajo

**Box 1: Using context and visual clues to make predictions**

Knowing aspects of the theme, the context or the speakers can help you predict the content of what you are going to listen to. For instance, while watching a movie you will be able to identify a situation where people greet or introduce each other so this social context will help you to listen out for and recognise some of the key words likely to come up in this context. Knowing that in such a situation you will most likely hear the names of people and specific places will help you to be alert and prepared for when that happens. At this stage the most important thing is that you are able to identify when these are expressed. As in your own language, you may not clearly capture those names, but you can recognise when they are said in the sentence. Predicting is about knowing when to expect them.

None of the people you heard talked about their occupation or nationality, and only some mentioned where they live. However, by looking at the surrounding background you could make a guess at where they live. The additional visual clues of how they are dressed also provide you with crucial contextual information about what they might do for a living and what they might be talking about in their introduction.

## 2.2 Anticipating, listening out for and practising

## unfamiliar sounds

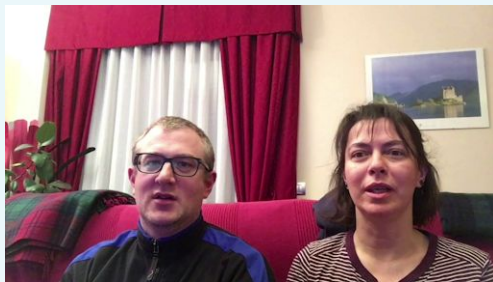
Being able to understand names and places can tell you a lot about what the speaker intends to say. However, it can be difficult to pronounce and understand foreign names because often we apply the sounds, stress patterns and intonation of our mother tongue.

### Actividad 4

In this section, you can listen how Spanish people pronounce the sounds of names in English. Pay attention to the following aspects:

- How the Spanish speaker pronounces the names with the consonant 'h'.
- How the Spanish speaker pronounces the names starting with the consonant 's'.
- In the box below, make a note of how the names with the consonant 'h' are pronounced, and also the names beginning with 's'.

Video content is not available in this format.



Provide your answer...

### Discussion

These are the names you heard:

Steven Spielberg  
Scarlett Johansson  
Harry Styles  
Whitney Houston  
Buckingham  
Stonehenge  
Stratford  
Hollywood

Notice how the native speaker of Spanish tends to adapt the English pronunciation of 'h' and 's' to fit the Spanish sound system. 'H' sounds like the Spanish 'j'. Words beginning with 'sc', 'sl', 'sm', 'sn', 'sp' and 'st' have an 'e' added to them.

**Box 2: Understanding names and places**

When it comes to understanding native Spanish speakers knowing what kind of pronunciation to expect will help you catch places and names more easily.

Although the consonant h is not pronounced at all in Spanish, Spanish speakers usually pronounce English names and words with h making them sound like a Spanish j (jota, jamón, personaje, etc.).

The combination s+consonant in a syllable does not exist in Spanish. Words that contain this combination of consonants often start with the vowel 'e' (español, estructura, Esteban, estilo) When it comes to pronouncing this combination of consonants in English, Spanish speakers therefore tend to replicate this common combination and create an extra syllable, pronouncing an e in front of the s: Scarlet is pronounced as Escarlet.

**Actividad 5**

Having listened to native Spanish speakers in Actividades 3 and 4, now think of the following:

1. How do you think a Spanish speaker would pronounce your name and surname?
2. How would they pronounce the place where you are from and where you live?
3. How would you help him / her to pronounce those names correctly in English?

Take into consideration what you know about pronunciation of certain consonants and differences in sounds and intonation.

*Provide your answer...*

**Actividad 6**

Now it is your turn to say something about yourself. Remember that when talking about yourself in Spanish, you need to be aware that a native Spanish speaker might find it difficult to understand names and places in English. To help them, slow down if necessary, without exaggerating too much.

As a last resort, native speakers of other languages sometimes adapt their pronunciation to imitate a Spanish native speaker, pronouncing 'h' like a 'j' and adding extra 'e' at the front of words that start with 's+ consonant'.

Say out loud your name, your age, the name of the place where you were born and where you live using the prompts provided. Imagine you are introducing yourself to a group of Spanish speakers. Put yourself in their shoes and make sure that they understand the pronunciation of all names and places.

Use some or all of the following prompts to help you structure your introduction.

Me llamo...  
Tengo... años  
Nací en...

Vivo en...

Soy...

Trabajo de/en...



## 3 Using knowledge of your own language

Your knowledge about how Spanish sounds and works helps you build up your understanding, but your own language(s) and your knowledge of other languages can also be extremely helpful.

### 3.1 Recognising cognates

#### Box 3: Using cognates

When watching videos in Spanish, you will recognise some words or phrases because they are similar to the ones used in your own language(s) or other languages you might know. These are known as cognates. Cognates are words that have the same or similar meaning, spelling and pronunciation in two languages. They are a useful aid when learning a language.

The following are examples of Spanish and English cognates: doctor/doctor, centre/centro, radio/radio. Some languages, like Spanish, have thousands of cognates with English. Sometimes, using your knowledge of the pronunciation, intonation and rhythm of words, you will be able to decode other words or phrases that you have never heard before in Spanish.

Just beware of differences in spelling! Identifying a cognate does not help you draw conclusions about the spelling. When listening, you should be able to work out how to spell most words in Spanish as the writing of sounds is very predictable.

#### Actividad 7

Being aware of words which have the same or similar meaning and spelling in English can help you not only understand authentic Spanish, but also expand your vocabulary in Spanish.

Do you recognise the following words? Write down their English cognate.

Español	English cognate
Actor	Actor
Arte	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>
Banco	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>
Concierto	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>
Cultura	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>

Memoria

*Provide your answer...*

Problema

*Provide your answer...*

Romántico

*Provide your answer...*

Tráfico

*Provide your answer...*

Verbo

*Provide your answer...*

Violencia

*Provide your answer...*

---

**Answer**

Español	English cognate
Actor	Actor
Arte	Art
Banco	Bank
Concierto	Concert
Cultura	Culture
Memoria	Memory
Problema	Problem
Romántico	Romantic
Tráfico	Traffic
Verbo	Verb
Violencia	Violence

### Actividad 8

Now listen to Paloma Zancajo talking about what she values most in life. Indicate the six cognates you hear in Spanish from the list below:

Video content is not available in this format.



- ☐ abundance
- ☐ associated
- ☐ no
- ☐ curiosity
- ☐ elegance
- ☐ family
- ☐ honesty
- ☐ ideal
- ☐ justice
- ☐ liberty
- ☐ magic
- ☐ persons

---

### Answer

Paloma uses the following words:

familia – family  
libertad – liberty  
justicia – justice  
personas – persons  
honestidad – honesty

Even though the word 'persons' is not commonly used in English, an awareness of the cognate can help you pick up on more details in an authentic conversation.

Notice that some words are not spelt exactly the same in Spanish and English, but are quite similar, so we can work out what they might mean.

### Actividad 9

Watch Paloma Zancajo talk about what she values most in life again. Then choose the correct option(s) to complete the statements below.

Video content is not available in this format.



Para Paloma lo más importante en la vida es \_\_\_\_\_.

- ☐ la familia
- ☐ el dinero
- ☐ el tiempo libre

Para Paloma los valores más importantes son \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ y \_\_\_\_\_ porque ayudan a desarrollarse a las personas.

- ☐ la libertad
- ☐ la sinceridad
- ☐ la solidaridad
- ☐ el respeto
- ☐ la justicia
- ☐ el amor
- ☐ la tolerancia
- ☐ la honestidad

## Actividad 10

Paloma also talks about what surprises people about her. Read the transcript of what she says and identify the eight cognates that have similar spelling in English. Then write them down below. List cognates that appear multiple times only once.

### Transcript

“La gente se sorprende mucho cuando me conoce(n) porque no lo aparento pero soy una persona muy paciente, tengo mucha paciencia. O sea, parezco muy nerviosa, parezco muy tal, ¿no? Pero luego la gente cuando... bueno pues cuando me va conociendo dicen: “Paloma, ¡qué paciencia tienes! ¿no?” Que no debe ser muy habitual en la gente pero yo no sé si es por deformación profesional o porque pues la gente me dice que la paciencia, ¿no? La paciencia que... que tienes.”

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

### Answer

no  
aparento  
persona  
paciente  
paciencia  
nerviosa  
habitual



deformación  
profesional

---

**Comment**

Note how Paloma uses the term '*deformación profesional*' in order to distinguish patience acquired as part of the job from a more innate patience.

## 3.2. Pronouncing cognates

You will now look out for cognates.

### Actividad 11

Listen to Paloma again and pay particular attention to the pronunciation of the cognates you identified in Actividad 10.

Video content is not available in this format.



### Actividad 12

Now read aloud the cognates Paloma has used.

---

no

---

aparento

persona

paciente

paciencia

nerviosa

habitual

deformación

profesional

## 4 Using cultural knowledge



Figure 2 Francis Drake

Knowledge of any differences and similarities between your own and the Spanish culture is also important for understanding native Spanish speakers. Your personal experiences will influence your interpretation of what you see and your interpretation of what people might be interested in or value most. So you need to be aware that these experiences might not always be transferable into other cultural contexts. Knowing about cultural similarities and differences will aid your understanding.

### 4.1 Happiness and contentment

In this section you will listen to and watch Andrés Ponga Colina. As you do the exercises, think about the background cultural knowledge you are using from your own experience to help you interpret what he says, and maybe work out what makes him contented. You will also use contextual clues from the video to help you understand what he is saying.

### Actividad 13

First of all, identify the three things from the list that make you happiest.

familia  
trabajo  
éxito  
dinero  
amor  
salud  
animales  
amigos  
viajes  
estudios  
tiempo libre

### Actividad 14

You have already met Andrés Ponga Colina. Watch this video extract with the sound off and try to work out

- where Andrés lives.
- what he does for a living.

Video content is not available in this format.



### Answer

Just by looking at the visual clues in the video, you can see that Andrés lives in a village, in the countryside. You will have guessed that he is a farmer looking after his cattle and working in the fields. We see him having lunch with his family. These

visual clues can lead us to believe that Andrés is likely to be talking about his family, his work and his animals, and that these are the things that make him happy.

### Actividad 15

Now watch the video with the sound on and find out what the most important things are for Andrés in his life. Complete the following sentences in Spanish according to the things he mentions.

Video content is not available in this format.



Para Andrés hay cuatro cosas importantes en la vida:... A Andrés lo que le hace más feliz es:...

### Answer

For Andrés it is important in life is to have some tranquillity, peace (tranquilidad), to be happy (felicidad), the support of your family (familia que te apoye) and have a partner. For him, the thing that makes him happy is his family (familia).

### Actividad 16

Are you similar to Andrés? What is important to you in life? Jot down notes and then practise saying out loud in Spanish what is important to you and what makes you happy.

You can use the following prompts.

Para mí las cosas importantes en la vida son \_\_\_\_\_.

A mí lo que me hace más feliz es \_\_\_\_\_.



### Answer

Your answer will be individual to you, but here is an example:

Para mí las cosas importantes en la vida son la familia, la salud y la seguridad financiera.

A mí lo que me hace más feliz es estar con mi familia y disfrutar de una comida juntos.

## 4.2 Body language

In this section, we will look at how non-verbal communication gives clues to meaning and helps the understanding of foreign language visual media.

### Box 4: Reading body language

One of the significant advantages of watching a video or a film is that it offers you visual support. You gain information about the context and the characters and also pick up gestures, facial expressions and body language that can help you infer meaning from speech and understand more of the spoken language.

Indeed, body language plays a crucial role in communication and an awareness of it and how it can vary from culture to culture, can be particularly important in developing the ability to understand in a real environment. Body language is made up of a whole range of features (eye contact, facial expression, proximity, posture and gesture), many of which we combine together without ever thinking about what it is we are doing or what we are expressing.

### Actividad 17

Now watch this video in which two brothers, Alberto and Javier Soto, talk about their love and passion for their family business. Pay particular attention to their gestures and how these emphasise the ideas they want to communicate. Match the phrases below with the body part they use for emphasis as they say these phrases. If you want, you can watch it with English subtitles.

Interactive content is not available in this format.



Cabeza

Dedos

Dedo índice

Manos en puño

Palma de las manos

Brazos

Cabeza y brazos

Cara

Cabeza, dedos y brazos

Match each of the items above to an item below.

“Mi padre y un tío”

“Cuando les hablas de la money”

“Ves, hacerse, sí lo hacemos”

“Coges la puerta de tu casa”

“Siendo un poquito manitas”

“Comparamos la pizza, llegamos a casa, abrimos el microondas”

“No lo comparemos con el cocido”

“Estoy superorgulloso de ser carpintero”

“Yo tengo una hija y él tiene dos”

### Discussion

Note that *cocido* is a Spanish stew. Javier is comparing the difference between microwave meals and home-cooked food to explain the difference between pre-fabricated and artisanal furniture.

## 5 Using subtitles

The rise in popularity of subtitled television programmes over the last few years means that more people are accustomed to using them. In a language learning environment, watching videos with subtitles can support not only your listening and reading comprehension skills, but also your knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

In this section you are going to explore and practise the use of subtitles to support your comprehension and your language learning while watching and listening to Dr Celia Sánchez-Ramos.

### Box 5: Intralingual and interlingual subtitles

Subtitles support your language learning by helping you visualise what you hear, especially if the language is challenging (either because of the vocabulary or grammar), because it is too fast and you cannot distinguish word boundaries, or because you are listening to an unfamiliar pronunciation, accent or register.

#### Interlingual subtitles

Standard subtitles are also known as *interlingual* subtitles (videos in foreign language with mother tongue captions). Watching a video with interlingual subtitles helps your brain process a foreign language by making connections, linking image, sound and text – the last two being distinct sets of verbal support – with translation. (Danan, 1992).

#### Intralingual subtitles

Intralingual subtitles (sound and subtitles in the same language) are believed to help improve listening and word recognition by helping students to identify sounds and distinguish between words.

#### Transcripts

While subtitles appear on the screen simultaneously with the spoken word and are not necessarily an exact match of what is being said, transcripts offer a word-for-word transcription of the audio in the video and are available as a separate document. In this course you have various opportunities to use them for your learning of Spanish.

### 5.1 Interlingual subtitles

In this activity you are going to explore and practise the use of subtitles to support your comprehension and your language learning while watching and listening to Dr Celia Sánchez-Ramos.

Of course, subtitles are not only used for learning. Many people use subtitles when they watch films, documentaries or even when they watch music videos. Answer these questions to reflect on your own use of subtitles.

### Actividad 18

Do you tend to use subtitles when watching films in Spanish or in other languages?

*Provide your answer...*

Do you use subtitles in English (or your mother tongue) or in Spanish?

*Provide your answer...*

If you use English or mother tongue subtitles, in what circumstances do you decide to use them?

*Provide your answer...*

#### Answer

You might choose subtitles in your own language for a variety of reasons:

- To help with understanding unfamiliar accents
- Because I have hearing problems
- To make sure I don't miss any information

If you decide to use subtitles in Spanish when watching a Spanish film, why might this be?

*Provide your answer...*

#### Answer

You might choose subtitles in Spanish for these sort of reasons:

- To understand everything
- To learn new words
- To learn new accents
- To cope with unfamiliar accents

### Actividad 19

Though you may find the use of subtitles distracting or tiring when you start, you will develop strategies to use them effectively the more you become accustomed to seeing them on screen.

Let's look at interlingual subtitles first. Listen to Celia and find out what kind of person she is. Click the button marked CC on the screen and then watch the video with the subtitles in English turned on.

Video content is not available in this format.



## Actividad 20

In this video Celia talks about the things that make her happy. Watch the video with the English subtitles turned on and decide whether the statements are true or false.

Video content is not available in this format.



Celia es feliz porque no pide demasiado.

☐ Verdadero

☐ Falso

Celia es feliz cuando ayuda a los demás.

☐ Verdadero

☐ Falso

Celia es feliz porque con su edad no tiene miedo.

☐ Verdadero

☐ Falso

Celia tiene grandes expectativas profesionales.

☐ Verdadero

☐ Falso

Celia es una buena ama de casa.

☐ Verdadero

☐ Falso

## Actividad 21

Watch the final part of the video. Watch it without subtitles. Then put the following list of things Celia values in the order she mentions them in the video. Check your answer in the transcript.

Video content is not available in this format.



La amistad

Hacer agradable la vida de mi entorno

Sentirme bien conmigo misma

Poner objetivos a corto plazo y a medio plazo

Ilusionarme con nuevas metas

La automotivación

Match each of the items above to an item below.

First:

Second:

Third:

Fourth:

Fifth:

Sixth:

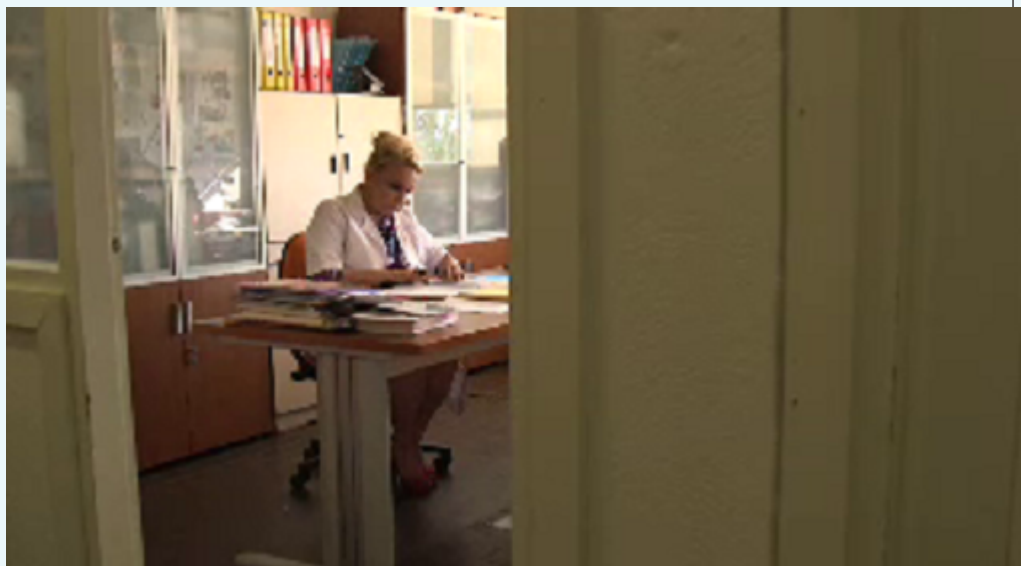
## 5.2 Intralingual subtitles

To practise the use of intralingual subtitles, watch the video of Celia with Spanish subtitles. Make a note of five new words or expressions you are not familiar with.

### Actividad 22

To practise the use of intralingual subtitles, watch the video of Celia with Spanish subtitles. Make a note of five new words or expressions you are not familiar with.

Video content is not available in this format.



Provide your answer...

### Actividad 23

Add the five words and phrases you identified in Actividad 22 to the table below. Then complete the rest of the table by looking them up in a dictionary. The first link will take you to a monolingual Spanish only online dictionary, and the second to a Spanish-English one.

Link: [Diccionario de la lengua española](#)

Link: [WordReference](#)

New word or phrase	English	Spanish definition
de trato fácil	<i>easy going</i>	persona flexible, agradable, positiva y servicial
entorno	<i>environment, context</i>	círculo(s) donde se vive o se mueve una persona, por ejemplo el trabajo, el hogar, etc.
Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...
Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...	Provide your answer...



Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

Provide your answer...

### Answer

You may have noted some of these words.

New word or phrase	English	Spanish definition
<i>de trato fácil</i>	<i>easy going</i>	persona flexible, agradable, positiva y servicial
<i>entorno</i>	<i>environment, context</i>	círculo(s) donde se vive o se mueve una persona, por ejemplo el trabajo, el hogar, etc.
<i>buen humor</i>	<i>Good humoured</i>	Tendencia alegre de una persona
<i>sentirme bien conmigo misma</i>	<i>Feeling good about myself</i>	(Note that misma is feminine and a male would say: mismo)
<i>a corto plazo</i>	<i>Short term</i>	Dentro de un periodo breve
<i>Nuevas metas</i>	<i>New goals</i>	Fin a que se dirigen las acciones o deseos
<i>Falta de miedo</i>	<i>Lack of fear</i>	Sin angustias o aprensiones

## 6 Coping with unfamiliar language

Developing skills to learn how to cope with unfamiliar vocabulary or unfamiliar language will help you to stay motivated when you are learning a language. You also get to enjoy watching videos and films in Spanish! Next, you are going to practise how to handle new vocabulary and everyday, colloquial language by analysing part of a video, then practising using subtitles, transcripts and shadow reading.

### Actividad 24

You already know that Antonio Feal Dopico is 64 years old and he is from La Coruña in northern Spain. Now watch the full introduction and put the aspects of his life in the order he mentions them. That way you will focus on the gist of what he says and get an overview of the structure of his introduction without worrying about the meaning of each individual word. Despite being faced with unfamiliar vocabulary you should be able to understand **the gist** of what Antonio is talking about, even if it takes a few listens.

Video content is not available in this format.



Datos personales

Trabajo

Personalidad

Idiomas

Cambios en su vida

Match each of the items above to an item below.

1

2

3

4

5

### Actividad 25

In section 2 we looked at cognates as a useful starting point for dealing with unfamiliar language and expanding active vocabulary. But beware of false friends, words like the four words below that look like cognates but do in fact have different meanings.

Watch the video of Antonio in which he talks about one of his obsessions and a gift he has, and try to work out what the four words mean in English. Beware of false friends.

Then watch the video again, this time with English subtitles and check your answer against the subtitles and write down the correct translation in the table below.

Video content is not available in this format.



Particular

*Provide your answer...*

Manía

*Provide your answer...*

Facilidad

*Provide your answer...*

Idiomas

*Provide your answer...*

### Answer

In this context, these are the ways in which these words would be interpreted.

Particular

Peculiar, unusual. Here the word does not mean 'particular'.

Manía

Obsession. This is here a false friend of the word 'mania'.

Facilidad

Ease. The word 'facility' is not commonly used with this meaning.

Idiomas

Languages. This is a false friend of the word 'idioms'.

## 6.1 Recognising idiomatic language

Language becomes more complicated for the learner when people use day-to-day language, familiar expressions or ways of putting things that can be difficult to understand. In this section, you will practise identifying idiomatic language.

### Actividad 26

Watch the whole video of Antonio and write down in Spanish how he expresses the following ideas.

Video content is not available in this format.



I retired 4 years ago

*Me jubilé hace 4 años*

I perform the functions...

*Provide your answer...*

I fundamentally value affection

*Provide your answer...*

...gathered around a table

*Provide your answer...*

I have a gift for languages

*Provide your answer...*

I am determined to learn Chinese right now

*Provide your answer...*

To be born again

*Provide your answer...*

For a change!

*Provide your answer...*

---

### Answer

I retired 4 years ago

*Me jubilé hace 4 años*

I perform the functions	Desempeño las funciones como
I fundamentally value affection	Fundamentalmente valoro el cariño
...gathered around a table	Reunidos en torno a una mesa
I have a gift for languages	Tengo facilidad para los idiomas
I am determined to learn Chinese right now	Estoy empeñado en aprender chino ahora mismo
To be born again	Volver a nacer
For a change!	¡Por variar!

## 6.2 Using transcripts

Transcripts are useful tools in language learning with videos. Here you will learn a technique to help your pronunciation and speaking of Spanish; later in the course you will use them again to identify features of colloquial speech to help your understanding.

### Box 6: Shadow reading (1)

Shadow reading using a transcription of the words by the speakers is also a good technique to practise listening, reading and speaking. One technique you can use is this: Listen to the video material at least once to become familiar with the pronunciation and the content. When you think you are familiar with it, **try to imitate** the speaker by reading his or her words from the transcript. You can try to talk **at the same time** as the speaker, **or** you can **wait until he or she finishes** the sentence **and then** pause the video **and read out loud what** he or she said.

### Actividad 27

Now that you have a better understanding of what Antonio says, practise *shadow reading* with an extract of his video. While you listen to him, read the transcript out loud, imitating Antonio's pronunciation and intonation as closely as possible.

Video content is not available in this format.



## 7 Deducing meaning

Sometimes we all face the challenge of not being able to hear clearly or understand what is being said in a foreign language film, perhaps because of background noise, the speed of the language or the speaker's pronunciation of words. For example, a Spanish speaker from Andalusia will typically drop the letter 's' from the end of words. You may feel frustrated when you can't distinguish each word that is being said. In the final part of this course, you can practise some useful strategies to help yourself overcome this challenge.

### Box 7: Deducing meaning

In your own language, you deal on a daily basis with understanding other speakers despite background noise, unfinished words and sentences, ungrammatical sentences, unpronounced letters and information not fully given. In your own language your mind will automatically fix incorrect language or fill in the gaps of what you can't hear or understand.

When learning a foreign language you need to rely on other strategies to fill in those gaps, such as making an informed guess based on the knowledge and experience you already have of languages and of the specific situation or topic, whether you are talking to a native speaker or watching a video.

When watching videos you have the advantage of being able to pause and go back or to view more than once.

### 7.1 Understanding the gist

In this activity you are going to practise your deductive skills by listening to Amalia Schubert Arévalo's story. Amalia's speech is natural, with hesitations and pronunciations you may find unclear.

#### Actividad 28

First, watch a short extract of Amalia's video without subtitles and identify which of the following topics she is talking about:



Video content is not available in this format.



- Her experience of living in Ajo.
- Travelling to different countries.
- Emigrating to Spain from Paraguay.
- Her family holidays.

## 7.2 Listening for detail

Now watch Amalia again and focus on the details she provides in the video. Which of these things does Amalia mention?

### Actividad 29

Select the correct answer from the drop-down menu.

Video content is not available in this format.



Interactive content is not available in this format.



### Box 8: Shadow reading (2)

As you practised in section 6.2, shadow reading using a transcription of the words by the speakers is a good technique to practise listening, reading and speaking. As before, listen to the video material at least once to become familiar with the pronunciation and the content. When you think you are familiar with it, **try to imitate** the speaker by reading his or her words from the transcript. You can try to talk **at the same time** as the speaker, **or** you can **wait until he or she finishes** the sentence **and then** pause the video **and read out loud what** he or she said.

### Actividad 30

Now that you have heard a bit of Amalia's story, think of how she comes across and of how you would describe her personality. Then listen to another extract and pay attention to the words she uses to talk about her personality. Even if you don't understand every detail of Amalia's description of herself, you'll see that by understanding just a few words, in this case adjectives, you'll be able to deduce a lot of the rest and build up a picture of what Amalia is like. Make a note of all the adjectives you hear that describe her.

Video content is not available in this format.



Provide your answer...

### Answer

You may not have heard or understood all the characteristics of Amalia's personality but by imagining them in advance, you may have been able to anticipate some of the adjectives she uses to describe herself. Amalia uses the following:

alegre (happy)  
simpática (friendly)  
abierta (extrovert)  
buena persona (a good person)  
trabajadora (hard working)  
divertida (fun)

She also explains that she gets angry quite quickly. For this final trait she uses a colloquial expression

"me enfado con una rapidez que no veas" which means "you wouldn't believe how quickly I get angry".

## 7.3 Recognising native speaker techniques

Amalia's speech shows some common signs of natural speech. These are things we all do in our mother tongue to correct ourselves when speaking spontaneously without much time to think. An awareness of these techniques – repetition, correction, addition, reformulation and omission, alongside 'fillers' (such as 'um' and 'ah') – will help you ignore

them and identify the essential information of a message. You'll be able to follow the train of thought and deduce what Amalia might have intended to say.

### Actividad 31

Listen to another extract and then, using the transcript, identify examples of these techniques.

Technique	Examples
Repetition	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>
Correction	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>
Addition	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>
Reformulation	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>
Omission	<input type="text" value="Provide your answer..."/>

Video content is not available in this format.



.....

### Answer

You may have identified these examples in Amalia's speech. You will see that they are no obstacle for understanding of the information she provides. With practice you will be able to recognise these techniques among the important content of someone's message.

Technique	Examples
Repetition	Lo más importante... lo más importante
Correction	con mi... conmigo
Addition	y
Reformulation	lo básico, lo más importante cuando voy a mi... a ver a
Omission	es lo más... [importante]

## Conclusion

This free course, *Intermediate Spanish: Understanding spoken Spanish*, has offered you some advice on working with audio-visual materials in Spanish. We hope that this has given you a step on the way to working independently and enjoyably with materials to develop your Spanish further. There is much material that is readily accessible online. Take every opportunity to watch, read and listen. You can listen to Spanish radio, use the internet and social media (for example, Youtube, online newspapers, Twitter) with subtitles or translations when available. As you have practised in this course, the use of subtitles in English or in Spanish is a good learning strategy. If you are interested in a topic in your mother tongue, follow this up with finding out more about it in Spanish.

This OpenLearn course introduces some of the characters and contexts that can be found in the Open University course

[L116 Spanish Studies 1: language and culture of the Spanish-speaking world.](#)

## Take the next step



If you enjoyed this course, why not explore the subject further with our paid-for short course, *Beginners Spanish 3: ¡Adelante!?*

[Find out more about \*Beginners Spanish 3: ¡Adelante!\*](#)

## Acknowledgements

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