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FRI: ¡Escúchame! GCSE Spanish Audios (Sonia Pardos)

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Language learning in mainstream schools focuses on developing four different skills, reading, writing, listening and speaking. These four skills that students develop during their lessons are the same skills that languages teachers use to assess their students' progress; the same skills that GCSE examining boards use to set their exams.

In England, teaching a modern language in primary schools became compulsory in 2014. Meantime, most schools in the UK teach at least one foreign language at secondary level. A document named *Language teaching in schools* (Long and Danechi, 2018) states that by September 2022 75% of Year 10 pupils would have taken a GCSE in a modern foreign language, following Government plans released in December 2018.

Meanwhile figures show that the number of students taking GCSE Spanish exams has increased over the past few years, becoming Spanish students' favourite language (British Council, 2018), the number of students wanting to study modern foreign languages has declined (Adams, 2015; Kershaw, 2017). Two of the main reasons for this decline are the low confidence levels of speaking a different language and the difficulty in understanding what is being said by native speakers of the target language (Young, 2014).

Exam results confirm that the most challenging part of the GCSE languages exam is the listening component, where many students fail despite of achieving high marks in their reading and writing tests. Listening exams create high levels of anxiety amongst students who desperately ask for advice in online forums. At the same time, teachers advise to their students that the best way to practice listening skills is by listening to the target language as much as possible. But, what should I listen to? students ask (The Student Room, 2017). As Fuertes (2019) said 'Lo que más falta hace es, desde mi punto de vista, recursos auditivos y orales que sigan la estructura del examen' (*What we need the most, from my point of view, are audio and verbal resources which follow the same structure as the exams*).

Therefore, this project titled ¡Escúchame! (*Listen to me!*) will focus on developing Spanish listening skills. The project is a response to teachers' demands, based on their experiences and my own, as Spanish educational writer. Using a multimedia format, I have designed a website where Spanish audios, recorded by myself previously, will be stored and freely

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Sonia Pardos

16 January 2019

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accessible to Spanish GCSE teachers and students.

¡Escúchame! is aiming to 'cover' the gap that exists online for free listening resources. The audios are based on topics that students are already studying in the classroom. And as these audios compile everyday life topics, they will also be useful to anyone wanting to practise their Spanish.

Finally, the audios will allow students to learn-on-the-go. Something that is becoming increasingly popular amongst students, being able to learn from their smartphone or tablet whilst they are commuting or doing different tasks (StudyBlue, 2011 ; Foti, 2014).

The audio resources will be demonstrated during the conference presentation, along with the story behind its creation.

Extra content

References

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Long, R. and Danechi, S. (2018) *Language teaching in schools (England)* [online] House of Commons library. Available at <file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/CBP-7388.pdf>(Accessed 5 January 2019).

Study Blue (2011) *Students who study in smartphones are better prepared for class* [online]. Available at https://www.cblohm.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/SB_MobileStudying_30Nov11.pdf(Accessed 19 December 2018)

The Student Room (2017). 'How do I get better at Spanish listening exams?' forum [online] The Student Room. Available at <https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/showthread.php?t=5011934>(Accessed 21 December 2018)

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November. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/nov/07/-sp-do-young-people-care-about-learning-foreign-languages-data> (Accessed 19 December 2018)



[Sonia Pardos](#)

23:09 on 16 January 2019

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Discussion (16)

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[patrick shearer](#)

9:21pm 20 January 2019 [Permalink](#)

Hola Sonia, Looking forward to your presentation. I have been trying to learn Spanish for a while and love the sense of achievement it has brought me - mainly because I have been teaching myself lol Needless to say that I find it easy to ask for something but struggle with the responses. I didn't see you great poster here? Anyway in Scotland- French and German led the way for many years but Spanish is now numero uno. Perhaps the real difficulty facing most self learners, perhaps learners in general - are all of the grammatical terminology. I don't know half of it in English never mind then trying to convert it to Spanish. For example past participle



[Sonia Pardos](#)

11:33pm 20 January 2019 [Permalink](#)

Hola Patrick, thank you for your comments. I am glad to hear that you enjoy learning Spanish and yes, you are right, the correct use of verbs in Spanish is something that students in general find quite difficult. Therefore , I hope that one day you can make use of this OER and the audios help you to practice and improve your Spanish listening skills as well as your grammar. By the way, Patrick you should be able to access my poster by clicking the link at the top of the page. The link that appears between the title of my project and the abstract. I hope it works for you!



[Samantha Bennett](#)

8:59pm 23 January 2019 [Permalink](#)

Hola Sonia! I love your project and can imagine it being really popular with Spanish teachers.

I had a conversation with my son after school today about his GCSE options and to my initial horror he said that he didn't want to do a language at GCSE (he can only choose between French and German) because he wants to take graphic products and business

studies instead. He then presented a very compelling argument along the lines of other subjects being more useful and he argued that the best way to learn a language was to live in another country or do an online course. The article you shared highlights similar points about MFL losing out to other subjects. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/aug/20/gcse-results-fall-numbers-foreign-languages>.



[Annette Hendley](#)

12:46am 26 January 2019 [Permalink](#)

Hi Sonia

My Spanish endeavours are more or less the same as Patrick's. I started somewhere on a website once- a really good one but I cannot even remember the name now - and I had the 'earworms' (I think) but to no avail.

The students at my school prefer Spanish to French and German. One said to me it is really easy, but his grades told another story.

You are right that the speaking exams create a lot of anxiety and I agree that they don't have enough opportunity to speak it. It will be great if they have a site where they can go and practise. I am sure the Spanish teachers at my school will appreciate something like this.

Enjoy working on it.



[Bernadette Laffey](#)

3:50pm 29 January 2019 [Permalink](#)

Very interesting project. I am attending a Spanish evening class but what has really improved my listening skills and vocabulary has been watching videos on YouTube on my mobile while commuting to work by train (Spanish with Juan - an excellent resource for adults but not suitable for school children).



[Sonia Pardos](#)

2:09pm 30 January 2019 [Permalink](#)

Hello Sam,

Sorry for the late response and thank you for your kind comments. I hope that this resource helps teachers and trainee teachers who are always struggling to find listening resources for their students, as I did whilst I was doing my PGCE. I can always remember the long nights after a school day trying to find some listening resources which matched the exam boards' specifications. Most of the time I was creating my own ones rather than wasting my time trying to find the right resource!

Regarding your boy, I am not surprised. Surveys clearly speak for themselves and your son's case is a clear reflection of what is happening nowadays. To be honest, I did never like learning English at school and I thought I was never good at languages until I spent a month in Ireland with an Irish family when I was about 12. I loved the experience and I

came back to Spain willing to learn English. My interest for languages started after that experience.

Recently I have learnt that many UK universities are offering free foreign languages lessons to their students whilst studying a degree. I thought it was a great initiative! So, you never know, may one day when your son is specialising in something he realises that learning another language may increase his chances of employment.

I think it is never too late. And maybe he is right, 'the best way to learn a language is to live in another country', because it is definitely more fun. ;)



[Sioban James](#)

7:04pm 30 January 2019 [Permalink](#)

This looks really interesting Sonia and is another project for me where I have a personal interest. My twins in Y11 go to a school where a GCSE language is compulsory, this is coming from a tradition of following the EBacc – only in very exceptional circumstances are students allowed to drop languages. This is clearly not the case for Sam's son and my nephew (now in Y10) dropped languages for his GCSE choices.

They were not very happy about this – with the changes to GCSE – students were only able to choose a maximum of 9 subjects – the twins elder brother did 11. Because it is a Catholic school, RE GCSE is also compulsory – in effect, it left them with only 1 GCSE that they actually chose! We did have a lot of discussion about this, I could possibly have pushed for them to drop the language so that they could have another free choice, but I said no to this, I think language learning is so important, not just the language bit, what they also learn about other cultures really matters – frankly especially in the world today. It still makes me cross that the UK government decided to scrap these – can't remember exactly when it was but I am sure it was when I was still school teaching – so around 2000 and as I was teaching some French at the time, I remember this did not go down well with the MFL department.

This said, mine both did Spanish and French from Y8, so now I have one doing French GCSE, the other Spanish.



[Sonia Pardos](#)

10:28pm 30 January 2019 [Permalink](#)

I agree with you Sioban, I think it is important to learn about other cultures. To me, learning about other cultures is what brings my interest on learning other languages. And I think that you do not only learn about other cultures but also helps you reflect on your own culture.

I find this fascinating but I understand that other people can have other interests. I also think it is sad that the UK government decided not to make compulsory GCSE languages. I am hoping that this will change in the future.



[Sonia Pardos](#)

10:44pm 30 January 2019 [Permalink](#)

Hello Annette,

Apparently, from newspapers' articles that I have read and teachers' comments I have learnt that the new modern languages GCSE exams have raised significantly the level of difficulty, even some teachers found it impossible to score full marks.

This can be very demotivating and discouraging for some students...Not really what modern foreign languages need right now.

Anyway, I am hoping that my resources can help teachers and students in the future.



[Phill Grimes](#)

12:49am 13 February 2019 [Permalink](#)

I like the development in mobile learning, which I feel could be integrated nicely into teaching models.

I wonder what effect the recent statements by the education minister to ban phones in schools might have?

Easy access website with short podcasts seems ideal based on people's language learning experiences.



[Potenza Atiogbe](#)

9:01am 13 February 2019 [Permalink](#)

Dear Sonia

I like your project a lot and think that it fills a necessary gap. I remember that for my GCSE French, my older sister who was studying French and Spanish at degree level created some listening exercises for me with some of her friends which helped a lot when preparing for the GCSE.

I have visited your prototype website and think the sound quality and content are really good. As per my openstudio comments and thanks for saying yes, I will share it with my colleagues at my Spanish evening class. It is about the same level we are studying at. If at all helpful I can share their comments with you? We have a WhatsApp group so I will send the link and get some comments that way if that would help? Do please let me know.

All the best with the presentation :-).

My question is around the networking side of things in terms of developing the project. Were there any networks that were particularly useful? Or was tapping into necessary networks difficult?



[Dr Simon Ball](#)

3:40pm 18 February 2019 [Permalink](#)

Hi Sonia

Well done on a great presentation! Here is a summary of the comments and questions you received following your presentation (including those you may have addressed verbally). Please respond in whatever way you choose.

Best wishes

Simon

- ▶ My friend's son and I play PS4 games together in German to help him prep for his GCSE. Do you have any plans for adding gamification? Happy to talk about tools for gamification if it's something you want to look at, Sonia (Rachel A)
- ▶ Hi Sonia have you thought of approaching adult learning services with this resource? I think it would be great for your target audience but has wider appeal too.
- ▶ Are you planning to include any collaborative platforms like discussion forum on your site



[jan turner](#)

9:58pm 21 February 2019 [Permalink](#)

Hello Sonja, very much liked your presentation. I thought the recording you played of Spanish speakers was particularly good for the very clear diction of the speakers. As a beginner, being able to distinguish pronunciation of individual words is a great help. Increasing the speed to conversation level can come a little later and with practice aided by good examples.



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