

Apps & Games “Best Practices” - Spanish

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Objectives

- Review Spanish and French Spanish and French Pronunciation Language Apps and Games
- Description, Pros, and Cons of Technology

[Folder of All Supporting Images](#)

This content is also featured in upcoming publications:

- Bajorek, Joan Palmiter (2018). “L2 Pronunciation Tools: The Unrealized Potential of Prominent Computer-assisted Language Learning Software.” *Issues and Trends in Educational Technology*.
- Bajorek, Joan Palmiter (2017). “Free Pronunciation Technology: Maximizing the Potential of Forvo and NetProF Pronunciation Feedback” Ed. Edwige Simon. *The FLTMag*. <http://fltmag.com/>

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Comparison Point: Siri (2017) supports 4 dialects of French (Belgium, Canada, France, Switzerland) and 4 dialects of Spanish (Chile, Mexico, Spain, United States).



Rosetta Stone (1992)

Presentation of Pronunciation Rating



Description

\$\$\$

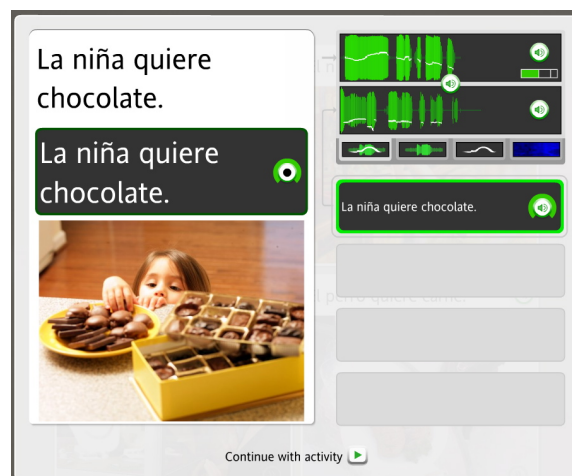
One of the oldest and well-known computer assisted-language learning software on the market, Rosetta stone was established in 1992. The software provides learners with immersive second language experiences on many media platforms.

Pros

- Provides native speaker audio, orthography, pitch contours, and waveform visualizations of the utterance
- Audio can be slowed
- Learners produce utterances up to 4 times
- Learners get binary feedback of “acceptable” or “unacceptable” in real time
- The interface is aesthetically pleasing and appears technologically savvy

Cons

- Very little explicit feedback is provided (Santos, 2011)
- The threshold for acceptable answers is too low; Software accepts input as correct when it should not
- Pitch contours and waveforms are not helpful to average learners who do not have linguistic or phonetic training (Santos, 2011)
- More explicit instruction, scaffolding, and feedback are necessary



- No dialectal support is given for varieties of Spanish

Citation

- ❖ Santos, V. D. (2011). Rosetta Stone Portuguese (Brazil) levels 1, 2, & 3 Personal Edition Version 4 (TOTALe). *Calico Journal*, 29(1), 177-194.

Language Zen (2013)

Presentation of Pronunciation Rating



Free, \$ Premium, School Subscriptions

<https://www.languagezen.com/courses>

Description

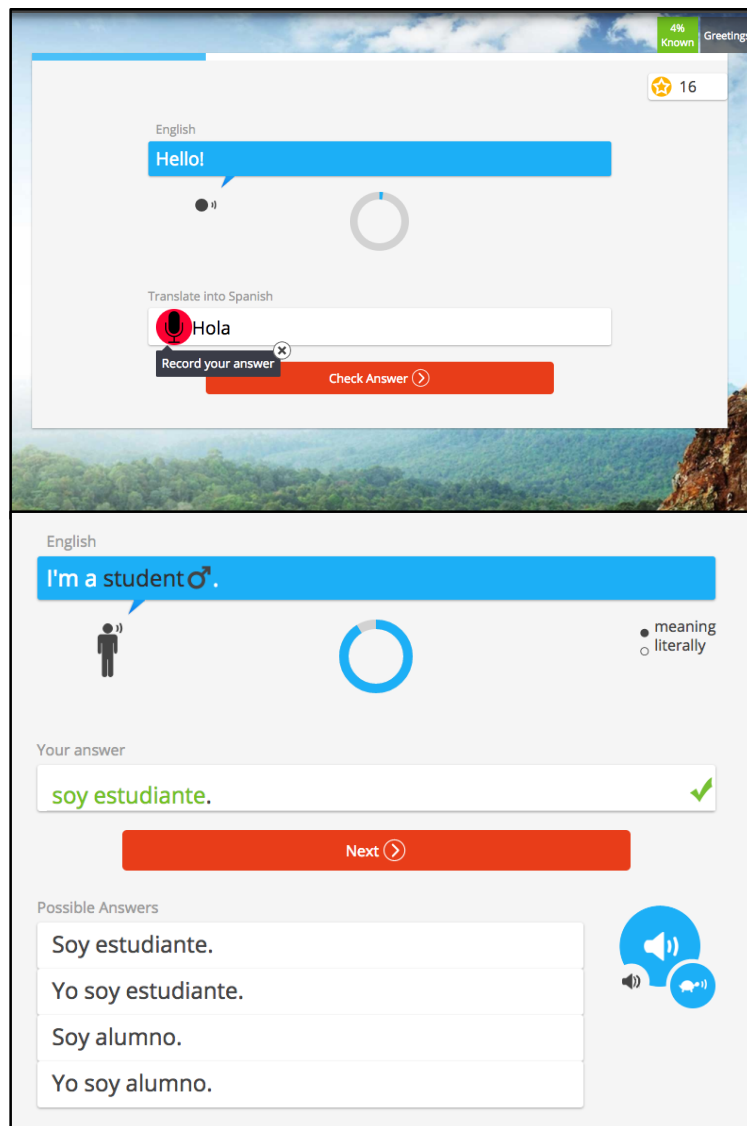
Computer adaptive language exercises provided in website browsers, Language Zen gives learners opportunities to practice Spanish through content organized by situation and by song. Learners can choose from a number of popular Spanish music songs and take lessons built off of segments of these lyrics. Songs are from Spain and Latin American artists, Shakira, Juanes, Enrique Iglesias, etc. Learners can also search through vocabulary items they are learning by part of speech in a review module. This new software has great potential but is working out kinks in its current form.

Pros

- Pronunciation is incorporated into most exercises
- Learners are asked to use automatic-speech recognition (ASR) software to record their responses
- Learners can get passive feedback from the ASR as to whether they produced the utterance intelligibly, the quality of the recognition is reasonably good
- Orthographic utterances of the spoken forms can be modified by typing
- The software accepts many different correct answers
- Students can play the correct answer audio again and in a slowed-down form

Cons

- The user interface is sometimes clunky and not easily understandable



- Latin American Spanish is the focus on the learning experience which might not be the goal of all learners
- The flow of the exercises sometimes is not evident
- Lessons expect much previous knowledge of learners
- Learners are not always given explicit feedback or explanations for correct vs incorrect answers
- Material is not easy to find and returning to the main menu can be difficult

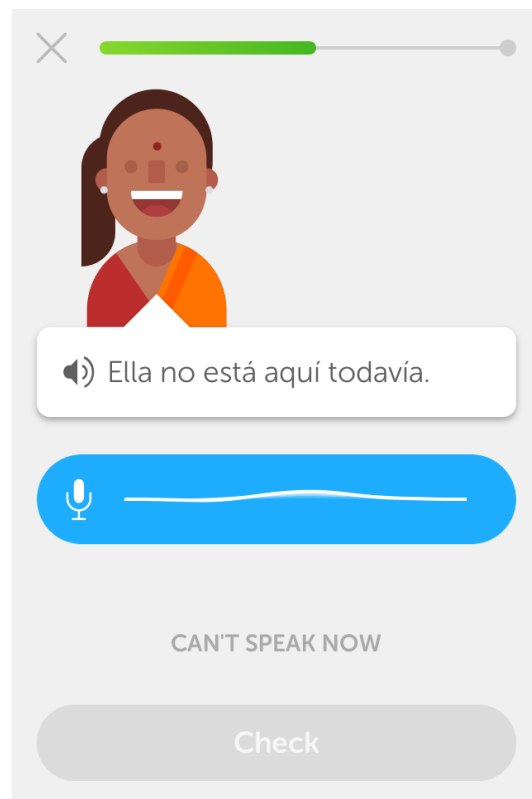


Duolingo (2011)

Presentation of Pronunciation Rating



Free, added features \$



Description

A crowdsourced text translation tool, Duolingo hosts a website and app that retrieves content from data mining the web (Garcia, 2013). The data is then organized into smaller chunks by grammar point and topic. Learners are guided through lessons with computer-adapted vocabulary, grammar, listening, and brief production exercises. Duolingo is available on many platforms, which vary widely in feedback and structure.

Pros

- Free to use, additional benefits for nominal fees
- Provides audio orthography of the utterance
- “Fun” and “a joy to use” (Duffy, 2015a; Garcia, 2013, p. 20; S.A.P., 2013).
- Gives immediate binary feedback, “acceptable” or “unacceptable”
- “Wrong, try again” feedback, (Chapelle, 2001, p. 73)
- Learners can try 3 times
- Significantly better feedback on Chrome vs iPhone platforms, however smartphones are most likely the most common platform of the young user base

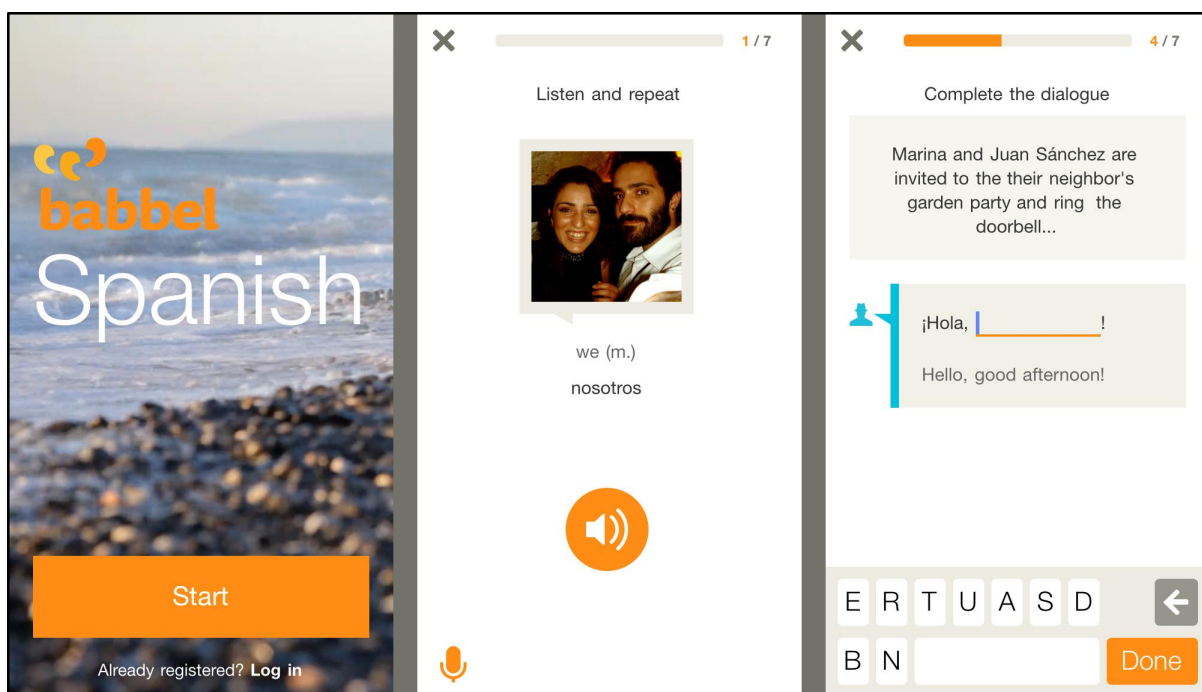
Cons

- Very unhelpful content, often pragmatically absurd
- Learners don’t know **where** they have made mistakes if the utterance is not accepted

- No cultural or dialectal support. Spanish is Spanish is Spanish.
- Threshold is very low for utterances, accepts audio it should not
- Analyzes segmental features, not suprasegmental ones
- Inauthentic content and lack of speech support
- Does not build communicative competence

Citations

- ❖ Chapelle, C. (2001). *Computer applications in second language acquisition: foundations for teaching, testing and research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ❖ Duffy, J. (2015a). The Best Language-Learning Software of 2015. *Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2381904,00.asp>
- ❖ Garcia, I. (2013). Learning a Language for Free While Translating the Web. Does Duolingo Work? *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 3(1), 19-25.
- ❖ S.A.P. (2013). Language-learning software Review: Babbel and Duolingo. *The Economist*. Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/blogs/johnson/2013/06/language-learning-software>



Babbel (2007)

Presentation of Pronunciation Rating



\$\$ for premium

Description

Focusing directly on conversational skills, Babbel hosts a website and app that focus directly on high frequency vocabulary and grammar points. Throughout lessons, learners are asked to listen and produce oral language. The company was founded in Berlin by former music technicians and the European, audio-concentration of the software is a product of these mindsets. Sophisticated and learner-centered, this technology far surpasses its competitors for potential learner pronunciation development.

Pros

- Inexpensive
- Cultural sensitivity through subtle notes, dialects and varieties
- Explicit instruction of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation
- Created by linguists and learner-centered
- Available on most platforms
- Pronunciation is integrated into the lessons, not an additional, optional feature
- Images and cultural aspects display often are diverse in background

Cons

- High threshold of utterance acceptability
- Basic binary feedback, acceptable or not
- Need for more specific targeted feedback on utterances



Mango Languages (2007)

Presentation of Pronunciation Rating



Free, \$\$-\$\$\$



Description

Mango Languages provides language learning software for most platforms and is marketed primarily at “libraries, schools, corporations, government agencies, and individuals” (Teshuba, 2016). With larger subscriptions at institutions, individual learners can track their own progress and have access to resources at many levels. Lessons build upon basic grammar and vocabulary points that are centered around relatively realistic dialogues. Designed by linguists and PhDs, there are many components that build off of contemporary SLA theory including explicit and focus-on-form instruction.

Pros

- Easy to use
- Beautiful user interface
- High frequency vocabulary and pragmatically useful content
- Pronunciation-form mapping support
- Audio recording waveform match-up exercises
- Spanish varieties “Latin America” and “Spain” are supported
- Context-specific lessons, such as medical Spanish are offered

Cons

- No feedback on oral production

- Audio recording waveform match-up exercises are unhelpful for non-linguist learners
- Waveforms give false sense of scientific basis for inadequate pronunciation support
- Requires a large amount of computer working memory and good wifi connection

Teshuba, J. (2016). Mango Languages. Retrieved from
<http://mangolanguages.com/company/>

NetProF Pronunciation Feedback

(2015- Release Date Unclear)

See page below for supporting images



Free

Description

Detailed feedback focused directly on pronunciation of context-specific vocabulary, NetProF is a free and open-source resource that was created by a collaborative effort between MIT and the Defense of Language Institute towards the advancement of pronunciation, specifically designed for the military. After creating a free teaching account, users can access a wide range of topics of various lengths of utterances. Modules include learning, practice, study list, and analysis sections. Teachers can add words and sentences and record audio files in the study list section.

Pros

- Sophisticated, immediate, and specific feedback about utterances by phoneme
- A fantastic tool if used in conjunction with instructor guidance
- Each utterance is recorded, saved, and scored out of 100 points
- Waveforms of the utterances are shown as well as matched up with phoneme coding that is color-coded for accuracy as compared to the target form
- Individual score history provided for each vocabulary word/sentence
- Several units and chapters of content
- Audio files organized by gender and speed of the speaker in the recording
- All utterances made by the user are analyzed and sorted by phoneme to give users a detailed explanation of phonemes to improve
- Sound files are recorded and saved for later comparison to target forms

Cons

- While there is tons of immediate feedback, it may be difficult for learners to know how to improve their phoneme production
- No explicit instruction of pronunciation
- Points out of 100 can be discouraging when most values are between 60-80 points
- **Validity** of the scores may be questionable:

- Native speaker tests of the software in various languages have resulted in 60-80 point scores out of 100 points rather than higher ratings that might be expected
- **Reliability** of the scores are questionable:
 - Background noise can significantly impact the recognition software leading to lower scores received
 - Gender differences between the learner and the audio can result in lower scores
- Vocabulary pertaining to military protocol might not be pertinent to all learners

Spanish Pronunciation Feedback

A joint effort of the Defense Language Institute (DLI) and MIT Lincoln Laboratory

Learn Pronunciation Audio Vocabulary Practice Study Lists Analysis

Unit: 1 2 3 Chapter: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33

Chapter 20

Unit 2 Chapter 20 Item 3457

los números ordinales
ordinal numbers

Context Sentence

Score History

Sound Accuracy

Score

Repeat the phrase exactly as it is written. Saying something different or adding/omitting words could result in incorrect scores.

Spanish Pronunciation Feedback

A joint effort of the Defense Language Institute (DLI) and MIT Lincoln Laboratory

Learn Pronunciation Audio Vocabulary Practice Study Lists Analysis

Week Month All

joanpba pronunciation score (Drag to zoom in, click to hear)

Score and average (281 items, average 66%)

Words Starting Apr 27

Sounds

Words with f first ten

f trend

Dari Egyptian English Farsi French German Iraqi Japanese Korean Levantine Mandarin MandarinTraditional MSA Pashto1 Pashto2 Pashto3 Portuguese Russian Spanish Sudanese Tagalog Urdu