

Phonemes of Spanish

based on H. A. Gleason (1961) *An Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics*, pp. 278–279.

Determine the phonemic inventory of Spanish based on the following data. In addition to the phonemes in the data, you may assume that this dialect of Spanish has the following phonemes: /f/, /ñ/, /č/, /y/, and /x/.

Note: [r̃] is an alveolar trill and [ɾ] is an alveolar flap.

| | | | | | |
|-----|-------|-------------|-----|-----------|-----------|
| 1. | aβana | ‘Havana’ | 16. | kuβa | ‘Cuba’ |
| 2. | bala | ‘ball’ | 17. | layo | ‘lake’ |
| 3. | baya | ‘rope’ | 18. | naða | ‘nothing’ |
| 4. | beso | ‘kiss’ | 19. | nuðo | ‘knot’ |
| 5. | boða | ‘wedding’ | 20. | pero | ‘but’ |
| 6. | buño | ‘burro’ | 21. | peño | ‘dog’ |
| 7. | damos | ‘we give’ | 22. | pipa | ‘pipe’ |
| 8. | deβer | ‘to owe’ | 23. | ponderoso | ‘heavy’ |
| 9. | donde | ‘where’ | 24. | pongo | ‘I put’ |
| 10. | durar | ‘to endure’ | 25. | siyaño | ‘cigar’ |
| 11. | ganar | ‘to earn’ | 26. | teño | ‘I have’ |
| 12. | gato | ‘cat’ | 27. | toða | ‘all’ |
| 13. | gola | ‘throat’ | 28. | taβako | ‘tobacco’ |
| 14. | gosar | ‘to enjoy’ | 29. | uβa | ‘grape’ |
| 15. | kasa | ‘house’ | 30. | syuðað | ‘city’ |

The following phones are attested:

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|------|---|---|---|---|
| | p | t | č | k | i | u |
| | b | d | | g | e | o |
| | β | ð | | ɣ | a | |
| | f | s | | x | | |
| | | l | | | | |
| | | r̃ r | | | | |
| m | n | ñ | ŋ | | | |
| | | y | | | | |

What are the phonemes?

Phonemes of Spanish—solution

[b] and [β] are allophones of /b/
 [d] and [ð] are allophones of /d/
 [g] and [ɣ] are allophones of /g/
 [n] and [ɲ] are allophones of /n/

The phonemes are:

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|-----|---|---|---|---|
| | p | t | č | k | i | u |
| | b | d | | g | e | o |
| | f | s | | x | a | |
| | | l | | | | |
| | | ɾ r | | | | |
| m | n | ɲ | | | | |
| | | y | | | | |

The phonemic representations and Spanish orthography (spelling) are as follows:

- | | | | | | |
|-----|---------|--------|-----|-------------|-----------|
| 1. | /abana/ | Habana | 16. | /kuba/ | Cuba |
| 2. | /bala/ | bala | 17. | /lago/ | lago |
| 3. | /baga/ | baga | 18. | /nada/ | nada |
| 4. | /beso/ | beso | 19. | /nudo/ | nudo |
| 5. | /boda/ | boda | 20. | /pero/ | pero |
| 6. | /buño/ | burro | 21. | /peño/ | perro |
| 7. | /damos/ | damos | 22. | /pipa/ | pipa |
| 8. | /deber/ | deber | 23. | /ponderoso/ | ponderoso |
| 9. | /donde/ | donde | 24. | /pongo/ | pongo |
| 10. | /durar/ | durar | 25. | /sigaro/ | cigarro |
| 11. | /ganar/ | ganar | 26. | /tengo/ | tengo |
| 12. | /gato/ | gato | 27. | /todo/ | todo |
| 13. | /gola/ | gola | 28. | /tabako/ | tabaco |
| 14. | /gosar/ | gosar | 29. | /uba/ | uva |
| 15. | /kasa/ | casa | 30. | /syudad/ | ciudad |

Question Is Spanish spelling phonetic or phonemic? Would you expect languages to have phonetic or phonemic writing systems? Why?