**IPA Battleship: Practice with phonetic symbols and their descriptions**

Danielle Daidone

Indiana University

ddaidone@indiana.edu

This activity is meant for students enrolled in a Spanish linguistics or phonetics class, or perhaps a pronunciation class in which IPA symbols are used. Its focus is on learning to write and recognize the IPA symbols that are relevant to Spanish, and thus it is not a pronunciation exercise, but this knowledge could be useful later when discussing pronunciation. This activity is best to do soon after teaching the consonants and vowels of Spanish and their phonetic descriptions, and before making students do any extensive work requiring knowledge of IPA (e.g. phonetic transcriptions).

Objectives:

* Learn to accurately write IPA symbols relevant to Spanish
* Learn to recognize symbols from their phonetic descriptions
* Learn to give phonetic descriptions for IPA symbols

Steps:

1. Make the gameboard (about 5 minutes)
   1. Let students know that they are going to play the game Battleship, and they need to draw the gameboard exactly as it appears on the PowerPoint slide so that everyone has the same one. The gameboard is made up of the symbols that we learn in my Intro to Hispanic Linguistics class, but you can of course adjust it as needed for your context.
   2. Before they start drawing the symbols, use this opportunity to point out common mistakes. Remind them that this isn’t handwriting, so the exact form of the symbol matters. For example, tell them that many students write /a/ as /ɑ/, but this is in fact a different vowel. A few other common mistakes are writing /ʎ/ as λ (it might be helpful to mention that the palatal lateral approximant is an upside down <y>), and writing /ɣ/ above the line so it looks like /ɤ/. I also point out that it is helpful to write /ɾ/ with a horizontal line at the bottom so that it is easily distinguishable from /r/.
   3. While they are drawing the gameboards (and later while they are playing the game), check everyone’s symbols and point out any errors. There are always some unexpected ways that students have written the phonetic symbols. For instance, I’ve seen /ɣ/ written as a capital <Y> with a little circle at the bottom.
2. Playing the game (15-20 minutes)
   1. Once they have drawn the gameboards, have students mark where their ships are. They should have two ships that take up two squares and another two ships that take up three squares.
   2. Students should put themselves in groups of two.
   3. Explain the rules of the game. The objective is to sink all of your opponent’s ships by choosing the squares they are on. In order to specify a square, you need to give the description of the symbol. For example, if you want to choose the square with /s/, you would say “fricativa alveolar sorda.” If your opponent hits a part of your boat, then you say “¡Toque!” and otherwise “¡Agua!” If your opponent sinks the whole boat, then you say “¡Hundido!” The instructions and IPA chart should be left up on the screen while they play so that they can reference them.
3. Wrap-up (about 5 minutes)
   1. To wrap-up, ask who the winners are, then go through each symbol one by one as a class and have them give its description and try to pronounce it.
4. Possible follow-up
   1. Give students a list of symbols and they need to identify with the description and/or a list of descriptions that they need to identify with the symbol. If you want to see how much they’ve retained, they should do this without the aid of their notes or IPA chart. You could do matching if they are still struggling.