

Phonetic alphabets

Ever tried to write someone's name down or perhaps more challenging their email address? "No it's P for Peter not B for Billy you knob, and it's S for Susan, not F for Freddie" so when the nice friendly policeman asks you for your registration number so he can look up if you have been a bad boy or not, it is best to get it right unless of course you want your mate to get into trouble instead. Yeah he could have a look himself but it's a long way from the driver's window to the front of the car.

Imagine this in a military concept, "no sir, I want reinforcements, what would I need three and fourpence for?" so communication is vital in many circumstances. The old USA war movies taught us Able, Baker, Charlie and Dog. One of the most famous being "Easy company" from the excellent series "Band of Brothers". The modern day NATO phonetic alphabet was established in the 1950's after introduction in the airline industry where giving clear instructions to pilots from various countries is also paramount

So, those of us who are ex-service rattle off the phonetic alphabet after being force fed it-literally. Ok so now we move to Spain and whilst the Spanish armed and police forces may use the NATO phonetic alphabet, Jose and Maria revert to homelier sounds just like non-military Brits do so it is useful to know for when dealing with the police as an alternative to NATO or those more frightening people, the bureaucrats! So here goes

<u>NATO</u>	<u>Spanish</u>
Alfa	Alicante
Bravo	Barcelona
Charlie	Cádiz
Delta	Dinamarca
Echo	España
Foxtrot	Francia
Golf	Granada
Hotel	Huelva
India	Italia
Juliet	Jaen
Kilo	Kilo
Lima	León
Mike	Madrid
November	Navarra

Oscar	Orihuela/Oviedo
Papa	Pamplona
Quebec	Queso
Romeo	Roma
Sierra	Sevilla
Tango	Tarragona
Uniform	Uva
Victor	Valencia
Whiskey	Whiskey/Washington
X-Ray	Xilófono
Yankee	Yeso
Zulu	Zaragoza

You will notice that the majority are the names of countries or cities and for sure regional variations will exist. Exceptions are Queso (cheese), Uva (grape), Xilófono- have a guess and Yeso (plaster). The letter W doesn't appear in native Spanish, only with imported words

My name doesn't have a Spanish equivalent so over the phone I frequently have to say "Granada, Roma, Alicante, Huelva, Alicante, Madrid". "Ah yes" they say and have a go at mispronouncing it

Mis-communication

Whilst we are on the subject of mis-communication, there are differences in non-verbal communication between motorists in the UK and the locals. One of the most obvious is in the use of flashing headlights which back home is a polite indication to proceed when you give way. Here it is the opposite and means "keep clear pal, I have the right of way".

Waving to another motorists causes much confusion as this is only done to friends and family so if you try and wave someone on, they are busy trying to work out who you are and won't move. Indicators are only used by foreigners as Spaniards all know which way they are going. To us it seems rude when we stop to let a pedestrian use a crossing and receive no thanks, but the Spaniards know that you have to stop for them and that they have the right of way, so as both know the rules of the game any acknowledgement is superfluous

Mobile phone use

Whilst the law doesn't stop drivers from talking to passengers, though many of us who suffer from instructions from back-seaters wish the law did exist, but we can only talk on our

mobiles completely hands free. Earphones are not permitted so use a blue tooth device, I have an excellent Parrot which clips onto the sun visor and cost about €40, or link the phone through the radio for example.

Well that's it for a fortnight as it is time for me to Foxtrot Oscar

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