

## ADVANCED ENGLISH WORKSHOP

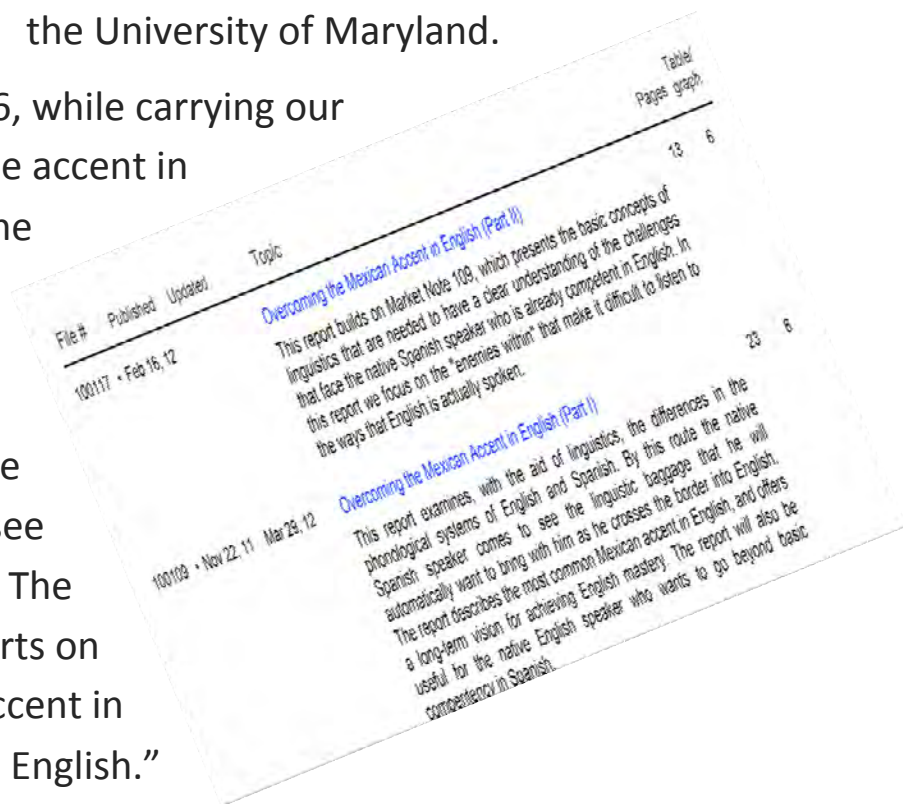
*For native speakers of Latin Languages and Japanese*

Our Advanced English Workshop is offered to organizations who have on their professional staff non-native speakers of English from languages that are built on the root vowels sounds found in Spanish and Japanese.

This workshop is meant for professionals in any field who seek to polish their speaking and listening abilities in English. The workshop has been given in Pemex in Poza Rica and Villahermosa, also in two government agencies in Mexico City.

The workshop leader is George Baker, who, earlier in his career, was an instructor in anthropology and linguistics with the Far East Division of the University of Maryland.

It was in Japan, in 1976, while carrying out our research on the Japanese accent in English, that he developed the Baker Vowel Matrix. It turns out that the vowels of Japanese are identical to those in Spanish, hence the applicability of this matrix (see attached) to both languages. The workshop includes two reports on “Overcoming the Mexican Accent in English.”



File #	Published	Updated	Topic	Table	Pages	Graph
100117	Feb 16, 12		<b>Overcoming the Mexican Accent in English (Part II)</b> This report builds on Market Note 109, which presents the basic concepts of linguistics that are needed to have a clear understanding of the challenges that face the native Spanish speaker who is already competent in English. In this report we focus on the "enemies without" that make it difficult to listen to the ways that English is actually spoken.	13	6	
100109	Nov 22, 11	Mar 29, 12	<b>Overcoming the Mexican Accent in English (Part I)</b> This report examines, with the aid of linguistics, the differences in the phonological systems of English and Spanish. By this route the native Spanish speaker comes to see the linguistic baggage that he will automatically want to bring with him as he crosses the border into English. The report describes the most common Mexican accent in English and offers a long-term vision for achieving English mastery. The report will also be useful for the native English speaker who wants to go beyond basic competence in Spanish.	23	6	

*The workshop is given in two two-hour sessions for as many as 25 participants. Follow-up instruction is available.*

## Advanced English Workshop

**O**UR ADVANCED ENGLISH WORKSHOP is offered to organizations who have on staff professional speakers of English whose native languages are built on the root vowel sounds that are found in Spanish and Japanese, namely, /a, e, I, o, u/.

The workshop is based on the premise that the starting place for improving one's listening and speaking ability in English is to be found in one's native language, not in English itself; that is, one has to become better informed about the phonological rules that one unconsciously follows as a native speaker. With these rules in mind, and with a basic grasp of a few key concepts in linguistics, as taught in the workshop, it quickly becomes clear to the mind and the ear *what English is not*: namely, an extension into English of the *rules of pronunciation* of one's own language. The goal is to learn to leave one's native language patterns at the linguistic border with English.

Example: In Spanish, there is no /st/ or /sp/ sound: Spanish puts an 'e' in front of the 's' in order for the /s/ to have a vowel to which it may be attached: hence, *esta* and *es-paña*. The native Spanish speaker will therefore have to learn to listen carefully to the way that in English /st/ and /sp/ consonant combinations that need no extra vowel: "stop" is not /es-top/ and "Spain" is not /es-pain/.

English vowels represent a special challenge, but the vowel system may be explained by reference to the Baker Vowel Matrix, which offers a mnemonic approach to learning the 10 or so extra vowels not found in the Latin-based languages or Japanese.

Spanish (and other Romance languages), also Japanese, are syllable-timed languages: each syllable of a word must be pronounced and given equal time as the other syllables. English, in contrast, is a stress-timed language, which means that syllables may be squeezed together (aren't) and unstressed syllables may be dropped entirely (as in "cam'ra" and "choc'late").

The path toward improving one's listening and speaking abilities in another language *begins in the mind*, then reaches the ears, and finally, is expressed by the tongue. This workshop is addressed to the mind of the participant.

## BAKER MATRIX OF ENGLISH VOWELS

*Mnemonic display in vowel groups*

i-diphthong	bite	bait	beet	boil	buoy Huey	}	Combinations of known vowels
	bout	X	butte	boat	boot		
u-diphthong	bat	but (ə) <sup>2</sup>	bit	bought	book	}	Unique to English
	Not in Spanish						
Only /a/ & /e/ in common	Spanish <i>Papá</i>	<i>Beto</i>				}	
	English father <i>baht</i> <sup>†</sup>	bet Neighbor bear <sup>3</sup>	X	X	X		
Vowel Group <sup>1</sup>	<b>A</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>U</b>		

### Notes

<sup>†</sup>*Baht* is the Thai unit of currency. The sound /a/ is rare in modern English.

<sup>1</sup>The phonetic value given to the root vowel in each group (column) is that which is found in Spanish, other Latin-derived languages, and Japanese.

<sup>2</sup>The most frequently encountered English vowel has no letter of its own. The sound is that of /uh/, as in “up.” In a word with two or more syllables, the schwa, which linguists identify by the symbol ə, is found in the unstressed syllable. The sound may be represented using any of the vowel letters and some combinations: *about* (a), *takən* (e), *pencəl* (i), *əfficial* (o), *səcceəd* (u), *fountən* (ai), *oc [sh] ən* (ea), *faməs* (ou) and *gracəs* (iou). Sometimes, in ordinary speech, in an unstressed syllable, the sound of ə is omitted entirely, as in *cam’ra* and *choc’lat*.

<sup>3</sup>In English, the same sound (vowel or consonant) may be represented by different spellings.

**READ COURSE REVIEW**



Comisión Nacional de  
Hidrocarburos

## COMISIÓN NACIONAL DE HIDROCARBUROS

Oficio Núm.- D00.- 010 12

México D. F., 26 de marzo de 2012

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Estimado George:

Quiero agradecerte la exposición que hiciste el pasado 6 de marzo a los servidores públicos de la Comisión sobre el tema "*Applying ideas from linguistics for energy professionals*", como parte del curso *Advanced English Workshop*.

Fue muy interesante conocer los conceptos y técnicas que desarrollas para acercar a los hispanoparlantes al idioma inglés. Es una forma eficaz que, con la práctica, sin duda nos permitirá romper la barrera del idioma y perfeccionar nuestra pronunciación para el mejor desenvolvimiento de nuestras tareas cotidianas, especialmente en la participación en foros internacionales.

Considero necesario hacer patente el hecho de que los asistentes —alrededor de 35—, nos divertimos mucho con tu sentido del humor "mexicano" y tu forma de enseñar, en la que induces la activa participación de los presentes. Durante la clase de dos horas se pudo apreciar la unión de voluntades entusiasmadas en absorber al máximo el conocimiento transmitido. Quiero que sepas que un comportamiento como éste pocas veces se alcanza en lecciones como la que tuviste a bien compartimos.

La Comisión Nacional de Hidrocarburos reconoce tu aportación al conocimiento con este programa, por lo cual te extiende una constancia de participación que se adjunta al presente, así como una copia del listado de asistentes.

Espero tener la oportunidad de programar algún otro curso en el futuro y aprovecho la ocasión para enviarte un cordial saludo.

**ATENTAMENTE**  
**EL COMISIONADO PRESIDENTE**

**JUAN CARLOS ZEPEDA MOLINA**



## MEI reports Issues of Translation and Linguistics

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100117	• Feb 16, 12		<a href="#">Overcoming the Mexican Accent in English (Part II)</a> This report builds on Market Note 109, which presents the basic concepts of linguistics that are needed to have a clear understanding of the challenges that face the native Spanish speaker who is already competent in English. In this report we focus on the "enemies within" that make it difficult to listen to the ways that English is actually spoken.	13	6
100109	• Nov 22, 11	Mar 29, 12	<a href="#">Overcoming the Mexican Accent in English (Part I)</a> This report examines, with the aid of linguistics, the differences in the phonological systems of English and Spanish. By this route the native Spanish speaker comes to see the linguistic baggage that he will automatically want to bring with him as he crosses the border into English. The report describes the most common Mexican accent in English, and offers a long-term vision for achieving English mastery. The report will also be useful for the native English speaker who wants to go beyond basic competency in Spanish.	23	6
100032	• Mar 27, 10	Aug 24, 12	<a href="#">Petróleos Mexicanos vs. the English Language: Translating a Square Peg</a> This report examines the principal terms used in the energy sector of Mexico and provides suggestions for standard English translations of some 20 common terms used in Mexican government and energy circles. Most of these terms cannot receive a direct, literal translation. An example is <i>órgano desconcentrado</i> , which is here translated as "Ministerial Agency."	7	0
711	• Jun 26, 06	Sep 5, 06	<a href="#">English, culture and leadership in Mexico's oil sector, 2006-12</a> This report identifies, as key issues for the new government, the topics of English, culture and leadership in Mexico's petroleum industry. The report discusses little-examined features of Mexico's oil sector that have limited the ability of the state oil company to keep abreast technologically, replace reserves and operate in deepwater. The report suggests ideas for requirements to be used in executive recruitment in the oil sector.	17	1