



Phonological Development in Primary Grades: *Nombres Cortos y Largos*

Pedagogical principles:

- Students learn word study skills best when meaning is at the center of the activity.
- Students should use words and texts they already understand to learn or practice word study skills.

Nombres cortos y largos is a strategy meant to be used with students at the initial stages of literacy development. Using words students already know, such a text about families that has been generated by students using the Language Experience Approach, and / or using their first names as the words they know and comprehend, the teacher leads the students through a series of steps and activities that focus on these aspects of word study.

Nombres largos y cortos:

The teacher reads all the students' names out loud either as a whole group or in small guided reading groups. The teacher models and then guides students into classifying their names into short names (2 syllables or less) or long names (3 syllables or more), and she/he and/or the students write their names on a chart paper. Example:

Nombres cortos (2 sílabas o menos)	Nombres largos (3 sílabas o más)
Mario	María
Sara	Eleazar
Betty	Elizabeth
Luis	Guillermo

Using student names (or other known words), a number of different skills can be taught. They can be taught on different days during one unit, or at different times of the year. The following list is meant to suggest several ways student names can be used for word study. However, the teacher should focus on the skills students are ready for, and pace the word study focus in a developmentally appropriate way.

1. Students circle their whole name after watching the teacher do the same to her name (**Concept of word**).

2. Students say their name out loud, chunking it in syllables. They then circle each syllable in their name and/or highlight each syllable with a color. **(Syllable segmentation)**
3. The teacher reviews the vowels (a-e-i-o-u with students) and each student underlines the vowel in each syllable. This step can be differentiated. Some students may only look for the “a” vowel, while others can look for any one of the five vowels, while other students who are ready for learning about the concept of strong and weak vowels can search for the strong vowels (a-e-o) and the weak vowels (i-u). One way to introduce the concept of strong and weak vowels is by using concrete examples. If students notice that Mario does not have an accent on the “i” while the “i” in María is accented, the teacher can, at that point, introduce the concept of the strong and weak vowels by explaining that María has three syllables (*Ma-rí-a*), because the weak “i” vowel became strong with the accent, while Mario has only two syllables because the “i” remains weak (*Ma-rio*). **(Phonics)** This type of attention to the whole word, the syllables, the sounds (phonemes) and the vowels can be repeated and practiced with other words that students know and understand.

Key to this words study activity is that students are familiar with the pronunciation of the words and these words are meaningful to them because they are the names of their classmates.

How Spanish Works: Rules for Syllable Segmentation

There are 5 different kinds of syllables in Spanish:

1. Direct or simple (*papá, pato, malo, sapo*)
2. Inverse (*ardilla, Enrique, árbol, indio*)
3. Diphthong (*diez, ciudad, leer*)
4. Compound or closed (*garza, mango, dedal*)
5. Mixed (*elefante, anillo, osito*)

Rules for dividing words into syllables:

1. Direct or simple (*papá, pato, malo, sapo*): When there is a consonant between two vowels, the consonant joins the second vowel to create a second syllable as in *tubo*: *tu-bo*.
2. Compound or closed (*garza, mango*): When there are two consonants between two vowels, the two consonants are separated to create two syllables: *ritmo* – *rit-mo*.

3. Grupos Consonánticos: Digraphs CH, LL, RR are never divided (as in *—ellos*). Additionally, several consonant combinations are never divided: BL-BR (*blu-sa, bra-zo*), CL-CR (*cli-ma, cre-cer*), DR (*nom-bre*), FL-FR (*flo-re-ro, fren-te*), GL (*glo-sa-rio*), PR-PL (*pri-mo, plu-ma*) and TR (*tra-ba-jo*).
4. Dipthong (*diez, ciudad, leer*): Dipthongs are not divided. A dipthong is a combination of two vowels pronounced as one sound as in *iglesia, ruido, ciudad*. Dipthongs are made up of two weak vowels as in *ciudad* or one weak and one strong vowel as in *puerta* or *Eduardo*. However, if a weak vowel is accented, the dipthong and the vowels are separated. For example, the verb “rociar” (to spray) is conjugated the following way in the third person singular past tense: *‘El roció las flores* (He sprayed the flowers). In the past tense, the word roció is divided into two syllables because the weak vowel remains so: ro-ció. However, in the present the word is divided into three syllables: *Yo roció* (*ro-ci-ó*) *las flores*. Other examples include *bebía* (*be-bí-a*) and *maíz* (*ma-íz*).
5. Triphthongs, which are less frequent in Spanish than dipthongs, are made up of three vowels that are pronounced all at once. Typically they contain a strong vowel in the middle of two weak vowels: *Paraguay – Pa-ra-guay*.
6. Hiatus (hiatos) occur when two strong vowels are together; they are always divided into two syllables, as in *museo* (*mu-se-o*).
7. Inverse syllables have a vowel at the beginning of the syllable (*ardilla, Enrique, árbol, indio*).
8. Mixed syllables contain a combination of syllables in one word (*elefante, anillo, osito*).