



Bilingual America™

How to
REALLY
learn
SPANISH

by **Ricardo Gonzalez**, *Founder & Executive Director of Bilingual America*

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Foreword

by Jane Madsen, D. Ed.

Penn State University

The "threads" of a cultural "fabric" are its language. Learning a language other than one's own native language is not a simple task unless you are some sort of a multiple language genius. Most of us, including me, are not.

The second paragraph of the "Introduction" in *How Really to Learn Spanish* is the mirror image of me before I enrolled in Bilingual America. My thought when I finally decided to try this program was: "This is the LAST time I am going to try to learn the Spanish language! If this doesn't work, I give up!" I have had a pleasant surprise. This non-traditional program has taken the threads of the Spanish language and woven them into a progressive learning fabric that works extremely well for the average learner.

As a professional educator who has made several attempts to learn Spanish aside from my demanding professional life, Bilingual America has truly given me a gift! Read this little book and apply what you have learned. It purports a language-learning style that makes sense. Seriously following the instructional patterns in the Bilingual America language program, you, too, can learn this beautiful language.



Jane M. Madsen, D.Ed.

Introduction

I speak daily with people who are frustrated and confused, people who have tried to learn Spanish in one way or another but simply have not totally achieved their goal. Many of these people honestly believe it takes at least two to three years of dedication to be "good" at the language — not "highly proficient," just "good." Many of these same people honestly believe that they have some type of "mental block" or "learning disability" when it comes to learning a different language.

Some people have had two to three years of Spanish in high school or college, others have gone to Latin America anywhere from six weeks to six months, some even longer. Many have picked up books and tapes at their local bookstore or have purchased some program through an advertisement in an airline catalogue. Some have even done *all* of these things and still do not speak well!

These people all have the same thing in common — they haven't reached their goal of communicating well in Spanish. They all have invested significant time and money and they are still not there yet.

The reason I have written this short book is to help you become an educated student, to help you avoid the pitfalls most people make in language learning. The case I will present to you is forged in years of experience both academically and practically. I am a pragmatic. I am a realist. Above all, I believe in being "up front" with people. I will tell you what works and what does not work.

You may or may not become a student of Bilingual America. We may or may not be what you want or need. That's fine. As we say in Spanish, "No hay problema." Whatever you end up doing for your Spanish training needs, I want you to go in with your "ojos pelados." That means with your "eyes wide open."

The only thing that is important for you at this point is to become an educated consumer. There is no sense or need for you to make the same mistakes in your Spanish learning process as those who I have previously mentioned.

In this book I will share with you many insights regarding language training. These will sometimes enlighten you, sometimes surprise you, and if you have already taken some Spanish and have been unsuccessful, perhaps these may even sometimes anger you.

I have had students actually say to me, "I wish I had known these things before. I sure could have saved a lot of time and money."

Well, let's dig in! Maintain an open mind and plan on getting a mental exercise.

You will enjoy it, I promise.

Chapter 1

The Importance of Methods

I cannot overstate the importance of methods. Methods are the key to your learning process. You must understand *what* you are going to do before you start doing it. So, with that in mind, allow me to introduce you to the importance of methods in Spanish training.

- A learning process is only as good as the methods that are implemented.
- A teacher is only as good as the system that he or she uses.
- A student will learn only as well as the teaching method allows.

If I bought a "Spanish Language Course" at my local book store that had dialogues of "Gabriel and Andrea in a burrito shop," that is exactly how good a teacher I would be and that is exactly what you would learn. You would be able to order burritos, but you would not be able to negotiate a business deal in Latin America.

Unfortunately, many people make the mistake of choosing a school based on pricing, location or social environment. In fact, the first question many people ask when considering a language school is, "Where are you located, when are your classes and how much does it cost?"

Sorry, amigo, wrong questions! A school should be chosen based primarily on methods because the method will determine the result.

Learning is primarily about what you do, not where you are or who you are with, certainly not how beautiful or nice is your teacher! The fact is that most teachers are great people. The problem is that being great people does not make for great results; great learning systems make for great results.

There are two types of methods used by schools. They are:

- Learning Methods
- Logistical Methods

Learning methods include things like:

- How are memory systems developed and implemented?
- How and when should pronunciation skills be taught?
- How do you develop speech flow?
- How is grammar and structure most easily and comprehensively learned?
- How is comprehension developed?
- Should you be introduced to native rate of speed immediately?
- Should you learn in a dialogue based, immersion method or through a bilingual approach? Is there a balance? If so, what is it?

Logistical methods include things like:

- Will you take a group class or one-on-one tutoring?
- When will you take instruction? Can you consistently make that time?
- How frequently do you work with a tutor or instructor?
- How much time do you need to invest in course materials?
- Can you leverage the use of course materials when traveling?
- Do you take tutoring face to face or by telephone? Why?
- Can you learn on-line?
- Can you use audio tapes or videos?

Schools can mimic another school's logistical methods, they cannot, however, easily mimic proprietary and proven learning methodologies. For example; any school can offer one-on-one tutoring, however, no other school can offer tutoring with the Bilingual America training systems.

So, which institute should you choose to teach you Spanish? The answer is simple... the one with the best methods!

The key I would like you to remember in this chapter is —

"You should choose your Spanish provider primarily based on the methods that are implemented in your learning process. This includes both learning and logistical methods."

Of course, in order for you to determine the validity of the methods, you must understand the logic and purpose of the methods implemented. You must learn *before* you sign up for a course somewhere. This, of course, is why you are reading this book.

Chapter 2

Assess Your Abilities

As I already mentioned, I am of Puerto Rican descent. As you may know, Puerto Ricans play a lot of baseball. In fact, I had the opportunity to teach English to one of our more famous Puerto Ricans, Javier López, catcher for the Baltimore Orioles.

One thing I remember about baseball tryouts was that the coaches always "assessed our abilities" at the beginning of each season. They wanted to see how well we could throw, field, run, and hit.

It is a good idea *before* you begin a Spanish learning program to assess your true abilities for learning a language.

Many people believe things about their learning abilities that simply are not true. I have had people tell me they are great language learners when, in fact, they are not. Others are more humble and say, "I am terrible at learning languages." The fact is many of these same people are great language learners!

We can accurately say that a proper assessment of your ability to learn should be done before you begin a learning course.

There is no way a teacher or program director can know how to meet your learning needs if he or she does not know what type of learner you are. This is critical. I am totally 100 percent opposed to someone signing up to "learn Spanish" before taking a Language Learning Aptitude Assessment. If you already speak some Spanish, you should have a professional evaluation of your existing skills so you are properly placed into a Spanish learning program.

Where, you ask, does one find such an evaluation? I am glad you asked. Bilingual America offers free evaluations by telephone for potential students.

Now, to the meatier issues of an Aptitude Assessment...

What exactly are we assessing?

Six Things:

1. Learning Personality
2. Learning History
3. Communication Skills
4. Non-Verbal Skills
5. Memory Ability
6. Logistical Considerations

I will not go into a lot of detail here about "how" these Assessments are built because, unfortunately, there are some unscrupulous people in this world who would actually take that information and copy it. Basically, there are values that are placed on many different questions and scenarios that allow us to get a very accurate understanding of your ability to learn language.

We can actually tell you *before* you begin a course of study how well you will learn.

The Assessment Process is based on a 10-point scale, 10 being the "perfect" learner.

If you score 9-10, you are an "Outstanding" Learner.

If you score 8-9, you are an "Above Average" Learner.

If you score 7-8, you are an "Average" Learner.

If you score below 7, we may need to have a private conversation about your needs.

Historically, our data show that:

- six out of 10 people are "average" learners.
- three of 10 are "above average" learners.
- one of 10 are "outstanding" learners.

What are you? Just visit our web site at the following address to find out:

http://www.bilingualamerica.com/assessment/a_waccess.asp

Please continue to the next chapter where you will learn about "The Fruit and The Root."

Chapter 3

The Fruit and the Root

When I was a kid, I lived in the mountains of Puerto Rico. It was great! My father has 27 brothers and sisters (not a misprint!), so you can imagine how many cousins I had roaming around the countryside. One of my favorite things to do was to go and pick fresh oranges right off the tree behind my grandparent's house. My grandparents had lots of orange trees and the fruit was always sweet, like my "abuela" (grandmother).

I learned something when I was young that has had a profound impact on my teaching career, something a lot of language teachers do not seem to recognize. It's this, "The life of the tree is in the root, not the fruit."

Most people "pick fruit" when they attempt to learn Spanish. They do not develop the root system properly.

Let me explain...

Ask yourself a question. "Where is the life of a tree?" I know I already told you, but I want you to think about it for just a moment. If you pick the fruit off a tree, does the tree die? No. What happens if you sever the tree's root system? You are absolutely correct, the tree will die! Why? Because "the life of the tree is in the root, not the fruit."

What is the fruit you want to produce as it relates to learning Spanish? What is your ultimate goal? For most people it will be something like "converse well" or "communicate well."

Here, precisely, is where most people go wrong, they focus on the fruit, not the root! They start learning in methodologies that emphasize the fruit; dialogues of Pablo and María eating in a restaurant, Gabriel and Andrea getting a taxi at the airport, listening to the radio in Spanish, watching Spanish television, or worse yet, they spend a lot of money and time to travel to a Latin American country for a very "fruity" total immersion course! Amigo, if you try to develop fruit from the fruit, you will be in a peck of "muchos problemas!"

The real question here is *not*, "How do you produce the fruit?"

The real question is, "What is in the root system?"

There are two essential components in a language root system. If you master, and I do mean master, these two components you will become bilingual. If you do not, you will not. It is pretty much that simple.

The first component is *words*. That is right, you need to learn enough words, not only enough words but the *right* words. You need to learn "enough" of the "right" words.

The best way to get good answers is to ask good questions. Let us begin to ask and answer some good questions about *words*.

Question: How many words do the average native speakers know in their native language?

Answer: Around 10,000 to 15,000.

Question: How many words do the average person use in normal speech patterns?

Answer: Around a tenth of known vocabulary or around 1000 to 1500.

Question: How many words do you need to learn in order to communicate well?

Answer: 1000 to 1500. I always advise building a vocabulary of at least 1500 to 2000 words. This is because even though you can control the words you use, you cannot control the other person. Because of this, you need to learn more words to understand well than you need to speak well.

Question: How do you learn and retain 2000 words in a reasonable period of time?

Answer: We'll tell you in the the chapter titled, "The Four Secrets to Long-Term Retention...How to Remember Everything You Study."

Question: What kind of words should you learn?

Answer: People speak about 75 percent of the time in five general areas of life. They are:

- Family
- Business
- Personal care,
- Travel/transportation
- Food/dining

If you want to learn to communicate well, you should learn about 300 to 400 words in each of these five areas. What good would it do you to learn 1500 words in "hydro-technology" or any other field for that matter?

Let's say you are a doctor. If you learn 1500 words of medical terminology you would not be able to communicate well, not even with your patients, because your patients will talk most of the time in the above five areas. What I am saying is you need to be balanced in your vocabulary unless you are just looking to "get by" in your vocational area.

If you want to learn words that specifically apply to your vocation, what I call "specific speech flow," you will be very interested in our "Spanish Specialized" series.

Let's get back to our question and answer session!

Question: What do you do with words?

Answer: You put them into *patterns*.

Question: What is a pattern?

Answer: In the next chapter titled, "The Power of Patterns," you will find out how learning "Patterns" will revolutionize your approach to learning a language.

Now we have the first element of our root system—*words*. We know about how many you should learn and what kinds of words you need to know.

One last note, when you are learning words make sure you learn in a proper balance; about 60% nouns, 30% verbs and 10% adjectives and prepositions. That is the balance of speech and learning which will allow you to speak well when you are finished with a training program.

Now, since we need someplace to put all of those words, let's move to the "Power of Patterns."

Chapter 4

The Power of Patterns

Picture this....

Mrs. Campos, (fictitious Spanish teacher), stands up and says, "Today, we're going to learn the Imperfect Past Tense." Your eyes widen, your mouth quivers, your knees buckle and your heart sinks. Why? Because the very thought of all this "grammar stuff" runs against your very nature.

Think about it, how many of us today opened our mouths to speak and after uttering some words of great significance, thought, "Wow, I sure am impressive, I just used a "Periphrastic Future." or.. "That was cool, I just created a Past Unreal Condition with a special touch of the Subjunctive Mood."

Let's face it, the only thing this will do for you as a learner is confuse you. Maybe you have already experienced this and you know exactly what I am talking about.

Forget about "tenses" and "conjugations!"

Language is not about tense, it is about time! It is all about the expression of time. This is where the "The Power of Patterns" comes in.

Every sentence is made using a group of words, and placing those words into what I call a "pattern." There are 15 different principle patterns in both Spanish and English. In other words, there are primarily 15 different ways to use the same words, thus allowing you to express 15 different elements of time.

In fact, you can create equivalents and line these patterns up side by side in English and Spanish. It is kind of an "x = y" scenario. That, by the way, is a very, very helpful thing to do for new learners or people who have not mastered structure yet. You just have to know how they exactly match up.

Here is how patterns work...

Take the words "to walk," "to," and "the restaurant." Now, I can use these same words to express 15 different things. I can say, "I walk to the restaurant," "I am walking to the restaurant," "I am going to walk to the restaurant," "I have been walking to the restaurant," "I was walking to the restaurant," "I was going to walk to the restaurant," and so on. In other words there are 15 different ways to express *time*.

Here's an interesting observation. In both English and Spanish, there are primarily three ways to talk about things in the future, two ways to talk about things in the present and 10 ways to talk about the past. Language tends to be evolutionary. Because people tend to talk so much about their past, we have invented many different ways to talk about our past.

Let's go back to the concept of putting words in patterns. When you can take words and put them into any of the 15 principle patterns, you can make sentences...lots of them!

When you can make sentences, you can string some together and make paragraphs. If you know how to pronounce the words in patterns, you can make "verbal paragraphs," which means you can make conversations with people. And, of course, when you are listening to native people speak, they are only doing the same thing; putting words into *patterns*.

This is very powerful so please pay close attention here:

Let's say that you have 2000 words you can interchange in any way you want into 15 different patterns.

How many sentences could you make?

Take 2000 to the POWER of 15. This is 2000 times 2000 times 2000 times, etc. This is BILLIONS of sentences, amigo. Learn to use the power of combination. Learn to use *words* in *patterns*.

Think about the color wheel.

The three primary colors of red, blue and yellow, when combined in different ways, allow us to enjoy thousands and thousands of different colors. That is the power of combination. The power of combination is absolutely incredible and if you master 2000 words and 15 patterns you will be painting some very impressive scenes in your Spanish communications! The idea is that you learn to "paint" for yourself, not simply make a copy or do some sort of "dot to dot" type of communication.

Being able to put sentences easily together for yourself sure beats struggling in conversations, or worse yet, being limited to "parroting" memorized dialogues as are in a lot of books and classes. Talking about "María and Lupe getting a taxi in Guadalajara" will not cut it in real life!

Let's pretend you just bought a brand new house with a walk-in closet in your bedroom. It is just an empty room with nothing in it. Will you just move in and throw your clothes on the floor or will you consider a "hanging system" first so that you can hang them in an orderly fashion? "Obvio," that is Spanish for "obvious." That is all we are doing. Before you learn a bunch of words and have no place to put them, you need to have a place to put them — a "hanging system." This only makes good, logical sense.

About four years ago I developed a system called "The Real Spanish Path" which allows the average person to learn 12 of the 15 patterns within an average of 10 hours. We have our students do this before they learn any vocabulary. It is an incredible process. In around ten hours of study the average student masters about 70 percent of the entire structure of the Spanish language!

Chapter 5

You are Not A Native... All About Immersion

You, mi amigo, are not a native Hispanic and will not learn like one. Why then do so many people buy into this method called "immersion," that basically says, "learn like the natives?"

Let's find out what it is and why it is not the best language teaching methodology as is promoted by many schools throughout the United States and Latin America. Please understand that I will critique only a method, not a school. Please put on your "thinking cap" and see what you think by the time you finish reading this chapter.

When people are "immersed" in a language they are put under water (everything is in Spanish and you leave your English at home) and most people drown! Have you ever heard it said, "The best way to learn is like a child" or "You should learn like the natives" or "Try to think in Spanish?"

Ask yourself a few questions:

- Are you a child?
- Are you a native?
- Do you think in Spanish?

If your answers to these questions were "yes, yes, yes," you should go to a school that teaches using the immersion methodology. If they were "no, no, no," keep reading. I think you just might find "the goose that lays the golden eggs."

I frequently ask people to consider how long it takes a "native" or a "child" to learn his or her native language. They say, "two to three years." I then say, "if that is what you want, then choose an immersion approach because that is how long it will take you to learn well." Also, if you think about it, that is *total* immersion—you know, living there in the environment. Think about how long it will take if you just go to an "immersion" class for four to six hours a week in the United States!

Let's dig deep here and analyze this scenario:

How old are you? Take your age and subtract two years.

That is the number of years you have been "thinking" in English if you are a native English speaker. For the sake of argument, let's say that "Jane" is 35 years old. For the first two years of her life her thought process was very "image based." If she saw a "pen" she picked it up, stuck it in her mouth and tried to discover what its purpose was.

At about two, Jane began learning to call these images by name. Pretty soon she became more and more "word based.," In other words, Jane would see a "pen," and simply say the word "pen" and that was it. She didn't stick it in her mouth anymore, in fact, if someone dropped a pen on a table she didn't even think, "Why did that person drop that thing to write with on the table?" No, she thought, "Why did that person drop that pen on the table?"

Adults are word based, not image based. When we talk about traffic we do not see little BMW's, Fords or Hondas flashing through our heads. The reason for this is that it is easier to manage large bodies of information concretely rather than abstractly.

Which is faster to download on your computer, a graphics file or a text file? Text is always faster to process than graphics! The same is true for the human brain.

Back to "Jane." For 33 years now, minus two years for when she was a baby, she has been thinking in English words. Every thought she has ever had has taken her directly to what type of words? That is right, English words. Thirty-three years of established thought process in English.

Here is an important question: "Is it possible for "Jane" to superimpose over thirty-three years of thought process in English so that in three months, six months or even a year she will be "thinking" in Spanish?" Of course not! It would take three to five years of her living in a Spanish speaking environment for this to happen.

Many teachers will point at objects in a room or on paper, thereby creating the mental imagery and then giving you the word in Spanish. As you now know, adults are not image based in their thinking and this is not effective teaching.

The immersion approach presupposes that you will "think" in Spanish. Everything you learn is taught to you in Spanish. It is assumed you will somehow be able to go directly from a thought to Spanish words.

You and I know this is simply not going to happen. I have talked with countless students who have tried the immersion route and have been told over and over that it is a very frustrating and slow learning experience.

Sometimes people will say, "the only way to learn is to go down and live there for a while." Not true. This is great to do *after* you learn the language well, not before. Please understand that the fastest way to learn anything is to work from your strength, not your weakness. It is very difficult to learn in a vacuum. Your strength is your English, not your Spanish.

In his classic book, "The Seven Laws of Teaching," John Milton Gregory asserts that "the unknown must be learned from the known." This is accepted in all valid forms of training. It is time we accept it in language training. It is faster, it is easier and it works. You do not, nor should you, learn in a vacuum. You learn best based on tangible, understood principles.

As it relates to immersion as a teaching pedagogy:

- You are not a child and you do not learn like a child.
- You are an adult with a very highly developed language infrastructure which should be used to your advantage.
- It is a slow and frustrating learning method for adults.

By saying all of this, I am not saying that I advocate a "college based," "traditional" approach to language training. I believe in dynamic, flowing processes that create automatic triggers from an English thought to the same thought in Spanish. In other words, this is not a static process. It is important that the proper types of systems are implemented so whatever you think in English *automatically* triggers the Spanish equivalent. Great training does this.

I can hear you thinking, "Well, then I would be translating." No, No, No! I said that we properly program your Spanish so whatever you think in English immediately takes you to the same thing in Spanish. This is true whether we are talking about words or verb structures.

People who learn in immersion methods are frustrated because when they do get into a conversation their mind is not programmed to get seamlessly from what they think in English to Spanish. They feel like they are in a mental gymnastics meet trying to find the right equivalents but they are simply not programmed in correctly. They are the ones who are trying to translate but cannot because of improper programming.

The solution is simple! You need to program your Spanish correctly so you can move easily from your English thought processes to what you want to say in Spanish. If we have the privilege of working with you we will show you how to learn so that everything "clicks" and you are able to put things together for yourself in any structure or time zone. It is a beautiful thing!

One last word about immersion. There is a place for it. You should be in an immersion program when you already understand and have a mastery of the Spanish language and are just looking to "smooth out the language."

Unfortunately, a lot of people pay for "language instruction" and are really only paying for somebody to try and talk with them in Spanish. The worst part about this is that many times they are trying to talk with you in Spanish and you do not even know Spanish yet! My goodness, if you just want to "talk" with someone, go down to a local Hispanic market on a Saturday afternoon. It is free!

In essence, many immersion teachers become what I call, "human dictionaries." A lot of time is spent simply answering the questions, "¿Cómo se dice?" and "¿Qué significa?" That means, "How do you say?" and "What does that mean?"

When this happens, it automatically tells you that you are being taught outside of your knowledge base. Dictionaries are cheap. Teachers in real time are not, so I would suggest that your tutor or

Chapter 5 - You are Not a Native... All About Immersion



instructor should be implementing conversation *only* based on your existing knowledge base so that you get comfortable with the application of that knowledge. More on that in a later chapter.

Before finishing this chapter you should understand that going to Costa Rica or some other country to learn Spanish is not in your best interest, unless you already speak Spanish relatively well. Being around people who speak Spanish is not the answer to *you* learning Spanish. It is not about *where* you are at, it is about *how* you are learning. If you want to go to Costa Rica, wonderful! My wife is from there and we go there from time to time. It is a great country.

The last time we were in Costa Rica we met a young lady about 25 years old. She had been there for six months "to learn Spanish." She had been in an "immersion school" with native teachers for three months and then traveled the beaches and countryside for the other three months. We met her the night before her departure.

Guess what? We have students at Bilingual America who have never set foot out of the United States who speak much better Spanish after finishing our Basic Level than she did after living in Costa Rica for six months!

Chapter 6

The Four Secrets to Long-term Retention

What you learn here has the potential to completely change your life! I have specifically applied these four secrets to the development of all of our Spanish Power Course Materials, and have found over and over that students who follow these instructions achieve very high long-term retention of material.

Secret Number One: Relax

The number one factor to getting long-term retention is relaxation, in other words, "chill out." People who are relaxed and "de-stressed" remember information well. To get serious results in learning you cannot take it too seriously, and if you do, you will have serious learning problems.

Have you ever seen pictures of brain cells under stress? The brain cells expand and actually make it difficult for the neurons to pass through your brain. The term "mental block" is a physical reality. If I push you, you will want to push me back. Pressure produces resistance. If you push your mind too hard, or in the wrong ways, your mind will rebel, and you will have trouble remembering things for any period of time.

I cannot overstress (no pun intended!) the importance of a relaxed mind and environment if you want to learn well. This has many practical applications and we will work through several of them. Some of the best learners are people who do deep breathing, yoga and meditation on a regular basis. These people have very fertile minds, as well as do most musicians, artists, and actors. Most of the time, these types of people have a fairly carefree view of life, and this keeps their minds in a relaxed state.

Here are some great ways to relax your mind...

1. Be positive about your own ability to learn.

I cannot tell you how many people I have talked with who say things like, "I am too old to learn," "I do not have a very good memory," "I never was any good at learning language," "I am really forgetful," etc. It is a fact that "you are what you think!" You've probably heard the saying, "As a man thinks in his heart so is he." There is loads of documentation regarding the power of positive thinking and the destructiveness of telling yourself negative things about yourself.

Make it a practice to tell yourself that you do have good memory and that you can learn well. Eventually, reality will catch up with your internal belief system.

Imagine the mental stress involved in trying to do something that you have already told yourself that you "cannot" do, or that will be "hard." Stop telling yourself things like, "I cannot," "This is hard," "I'll never get this," or worse yet, "I am so stupid." None of those things are true! If you have this kind of "stink'n think'n," you are only creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.

If you fear you will not learn, then you will not learn. The primary reason is because you are setting up so much mental stress that it becomes impossible.

2. Do deep abdominal breathing with your eyes closed.

Most people in the Western Hemisphere breathe through their chests. Unfortunately, this is not the best way to breathe. The human body is designed to eliminate up to 70 percent of the toxins in the body through breathing and this is done through deep abdominal breathing, not short breathing through the chest.

Here is a great breathing technique I learned several years ago that will help you. It is done in a 4 - 6 - 8 sequence.

Breathe in through your nose for four seconds. Please make sure you put your hand on your abdomen, and that you actually fill your abdomen with air. Hold the breath for six seconds. During this time you should let your mind go blank and let go of any concerns and thoughts that you have.

Slowly exhale through your mouth for eight seconds. You should feel like a tire going flat or like a balloon that is slowly releasing air. When I do this I can feel my shoulders "tingle" as I release the stress. Repeat this at least three times each sequence.

I recommend you do deep breathing at least three times daily; in the morning, at noon and again in the evening after work. I also recommend that you do this before you sit down to have any extended period of study.

3. Exercise at least three times weekly in a peaceful environment.

There has been a lot written about the benefits of exercise to allow a person to relax. This is true if when you exercise you allow yourself to have peace and quiet so that you can meditate.

This is not true of people who exercise in a busy or loud environment. I stopped going to a gym because I could not relax there...TV's, music, people talking. I was mentally better off sitting at home on my sofa! To aid in developing a good memory, you should exercise regularly, if possible, in a peaceful environment.

4. Visualize yourself at peace.

I think that if you asked 100 thinking people what they really want in life, most would say, "peace." If you want to be at peace, then you need to train yourself to be at peace. Visualize yourself in peaceful surroundings and settings.

My all time favorite "peaceful" place is up on the top of a mountain in Puerto Rico looking over the Caribbean Sea. I mentally go there several times a week. In fact, I had a mural painted of this exact scene in one the rooms at Bilingual America's headquarters so that I could "go there" more often.

5. Give yourself enough time to learn something correctly.

In other words, be patient in a learning process and do not try to "cram" in information too quickly. In the right kinds of learning systems you will be able to learn things well within a bigger process. Remember, too much pressure will produce resistance.

Secret Number Two: Be Ridiculous

This simply means when you are learning you need to have fun! Things need to be a little humorous, a little ridiculous. We all know that laughter produces a relaxed mind, and now you know that a relaxed mind is critical to strong learning. Let me give you a good example of what I mean by learning in a ridiculous way...

While learning Spanish you will need to learn a lot of new words. Let's say you come across the word "the oak tree." "The oak tree" in Spanish is "el roble" and is pronounced like "I row blay." That is the letter "I" then "row" then "blay."

You have a choice; either learn "the oak tree - el roble" by looking at a book or by using a retention card. As you learn you can mumble the information to yourself ...or... picture a big "el roble" falling right on top of you and you start screaming "EL ROBLE, EL ROBLE, EL ROBLE." I guarantee if you picture the tree falling on top of you and start shaking your body as you are saying, "EL ROBLE, EL ROBLE, EL ROBLE" you will remember the word.

If you are learning the word for "the food" (la comida) then do not just say "la comida." Imagine yourself starving to death after having been abandoned in the wilderness for 10 days, and someone puts your favorite food in front of you and you say, "La Comida a a a a a a..."

There is a basic law of memory that you need to understand. *You will always remember what you do with passion and emotion!!!!!!!!!!* Lifeless, emotionless learning is not only boring, it does not work very well. If you want things to "stick" then you must have fun when you are learning. Be dramatic and do crazy things to remember information.

This makes sense, doesn't it? Actors and actresses can remember their lines because they put words within an emotional context. You can and should do the same, if you want to remember what you study.

The people who struggle with this are your "left-brain" analytical thinkers. People who are very "fact" oriented and have difficulty with "out-of-the-box" thinking are "left-brain."

In general, women learn language more quickly than men because they tend to be more "right-brain" in their way of viewing things. All I can say is whatever your gender and tendencies, it is worth the extra effort to learn with lots of ridiculous passion and emotion. Not only will you learn more quickly, you will have more fun in the process!

Secret Number Three: Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

It has been said that repetition is "the mother of all learning." Do something enough times and eventually you will get it no matter how hard-headed you are! The way to reduce the number of times is to apply the first two secrets that I gave you; relax and be ridiculous. If, however, you do not want to relax and be ridiculous you can actually get long-term memory by just doing the same thing enough times in enough different ways.

The average person needs at least 15 repetitions of the same thing to begin to store it into long-term memory. That means that every new word that you learn should be "cycled" through your brain at least 15 times if you want to remember it. This is critical in language learning because you may use one word in a conversation, and not use it again for two to three weeks! If the word is not truly stored in long-term memory, you will have trouble recalling it again after two weeks.

No repetitive memory system is one reason among many why so many language courses are not successful. In other words, they give you the information, but they do not set up the correct number of repetitions you need to actually achieve long-term memory.

For this reason, (among others) many people go through language courses, get good grades, or feel like they understand things but still cannot recall words and structures in a real conversation. One of the things we do in all Bilingual America Spanish Courses is to set up repetitive memory systems. Unless you do not follow instructions, you will learn!

When we do a Language Learning Aptitude Assessment we grade your memory ability by asking some pretty pointed questions that give very accurate results. By doing this we can accurately set up the proper amounts of repetitions that should have for your particular memory skill set.

If you want to learn using course materials that have repetitive processes built into the system, whether it be vocabulary or structure, then you will love our Spanish courses. The fact is you cannot get out of a lesson without having worked with each vocabulary word at least 15 times, and each structure taught a minimum of 60 times! It is built right into the learning system, and absolutely insures that the Spanish will be retained.

Secret Number Four: Retroactivity

Retroactivity is a close cousin to *repetition*. Repetition is how many times you repeat something in a given time period, retroactivity is how long you use and apply it from when you initially learned it. You can do 20 repetitions of something over ten minutes or you can do 20 repetitions over five days. If you do it over five days (retroactivity) it will store more easily into long-term memory than if you do it so many times (repetition) in ten minutes.

Information is stored into long-term memory most easily in manageable bits and pieces. You do not want to attempt to "cram" things into long-term memory. It will not go there, it will go into short-term memory.

The good news is that you do not have to figure all of this out since it is already done for you in all of our Spanish Courses. We determine the amount of repetitions and retroactivity on a customized basis after seeing the results of your Aptitude Assessment.

Different people need different amounts of repetition and retroactivity. I challenge you to find *one* Spanish Course anywhere outside of Spanish Power that uses specialized repetitive and retroactive learning systems. If you find one, please let me know because I have not seen one!

Closing Thoughts to Remember...

If you apply these "Four Secrets to Retention" to your learning activities, you will learn. You can be sure any course you ever take at Bilingual America will be filled with learning that is *relaxing*, *ridiculous*, *repetitive* and *retroactive* in nature!

Chapter 7

The Cozy, Comfortable Classroom

Permit me to go ahead and get my views on classroom training right “out in the open.” Classroom training in language training does not really work.

Every study I have ever read or any experience I have ever had is conclusive regarding group class language training. Eight hours of group class is equivalent to one hour of one-on-one training as it relates to result. This makes sense. If you have eight people in a class for one hour, the most time any one student could get in "real" attention would be 7.5 minutes. That is not enough attention twice a week to learn how to speak well! Just figure it out if you are in a class with 20 people.

Why learning Spanish in a group class is not pedagogically sound:

In simple terms this means, “why it does not work that well from a teaching and learning standpoint.” There are three main reasons why learning in a classroom environment is slow, frustrating and ineffective.

1. You learn at the rate of speed of the other students in the class.

The class can only move as fast as the slowest verbal learner. Many times people will miss classes and then when they come back they will take up a large portion of the class to catch up. This isn't fair to the other students who were there for the last session. Many times there are students in the class who simply cannot learn quickly. This is frustrating for both the highly capable learner and for the slow learner. The slow learner wants everything to slow down and the fast learner wants things to go more quickly. What ends up happening in most cases is that both types of people end up frustrated!

2. You practice with other people who do not know what they are doing.

In a classroom environment you are constantly hearing people who speak Spanish poorly. This does not help the new learner because it only reinforces poor pronunciation habits. The blind simply cannot lead the blind. Many times the good students are “punished” because they are asked to help the slower students. The bottom line is that if you are going to master a language in a relatively short period of time you cannot spend your time practicing with people who are just hacking away at the language. You need to practice with someone who knows how to lead you through the process properly.

3. You learn in a unilateral discourse rather than in an interactive process.

To truly master a language you must interact directly with the language. In a class a great deal of time is spent listening to an instructor talk. This is not the best use of your time if you are serious about mastering the language. You need to spend your time either directly interacting with the language (mastering vocabulary and structure) through interactive learning processes or practicing with someone who knows how to build your confidence.

There are other pedagogical reasons why a classroom language learning experience is very ineffective but these three are sufficient to prove the point. One needs only think of how many people are walking around with two or three years of high school and college Spanish who cannot carry a decent conversation to understand that this is not a good option from a learning standpoint.

Why learning in a classroom is not economically sound:

Most people are concerned about making wise investments with their money. Is learning with a group of people truly the most economical way to learn? Let's find out by looking at a couple of different hypothetical scenarios.

Scenario #1

Let's say you decide to take a group class to learn to become proficient in the Spanish language. At best, you would need three years of classes. That is a fact! Let's "lowball" the price and say that each class down at the local community college or at the local private language school costs you \$199 for 10 weeks of class twice a week for an hour each class. You say, "OK, I can afford that, I am signing up." So you have twenty hours of class for \$199. Let's say that you do that four times a year. How much did you spend that year on Spanish classes? that is right, \$796. How many years minimum will you need to take classes to speak well in the classroom environment? Three years. What is three times \$796? That's right, \$2388. Now, that wasn't as inexpensive as you thought was it? When you factor in your lost time driving back and forth, gas, oil and possible lost income from not being able to speak well more quickly, it really adds up to much more than \$2388!

Scenario #2

Let's say that Harry is 30 years old and has a job as a medical assistant. His annual salary is \$40,000. A position becomes available for \$50,000. The only problem is that the position requires that he be able to communicate well in Spanish. Harry goes and signs up for the local group class to learn Spanish. Harry takes three years to learn to communicate well. How much money did that Spanish class cost Harry? That's right, \$30,000 in lost revenue because he could not get the job plus the \$2388 from the first scenario to pay for all the classes that he would need to get up to speed.

Now, all of this makes perfect sense. Why then, do schools teach group classes knowing full well that the success rate of students learning to communicate well is almost zero?

Chapter 7 - The Comfortable, Cozy Classroom



Look at the numbers. Let's say each student is paying \$10 an hour for that class.

Let's say that there are 15 students in the class. How much is the school taking in per hour? That is right, \$150 an hour. How much could they charge you if you were taking private instruction? Not \$150 an hour, that's for sure!

That, amigo, is why schools teach group classes. For pure economic purposes because they sure do not get results. They know it, and now, so do you!

Bilingual America is committed to results and therefore does not offer the option of a group class. Is that economically sound? No, it costs us a lot of money annually. Is it right? Absolutely, because we go to sleep at night knowing that we are offering only options that actually work and that produce solid results for our students.

Chapter 8

Eight Reasons Why Telephone Tutoring is *Better* than Face to Face Tutoring

There is no question about it, you will get a stronger result by taking your tutoring by telephone than if you take tutoring in person.

Many people are surprised when they first hear this but after you read these eight reasons you will be convinced!

#1 - Better Comprehension

When you are tutored by telephone you learn to hear voice. When you are taught face to face, about 30 percent of what you think you hear are the non-verbal gestures. People who are taught in person will finish a course of study, go to talk with someone on the phone, and freeze because they just lost 30 percent of their communications!

People who are taught on the telephone will do well on the telephone. They will also do great in person, because they get an additional 30 percent in the non-verbal gestures that they were not even accustomed to in normal tutoring process!

#2 - Better Pronunciation

People typically talk about 10 to 15 percent more loudly on the phone than in person. To speak more loudly you need to open your mouth more widely, and we all know that opening your mouth widely is a prerequisite to developing good enunciation and pronunciation.

#3 - Leverage Your Time

Instead of spending your precious time driving to a school or to someone's home to take a Spanish class, you can use that time to learn through the use of interactive course materials. I will talk about that more in Chapter 10.

#4 - Flexibility

If you do any traveling, you can stay consistent in your tutoring by simply picking up a telephone. It does not matter if you are in Iowa, New Jersey, Utah, Mexico, Venezuela or Germany. If you can get to a telephone, you can take your tutoring.

Chapter 8 - Eight Reasons Why Telephone Tutoring is Better Than Face to Face Tutoring



If you have a schedule that is variable, you can schedule tutoring on an "as you go" basis. You do not need to lock into the same times every week. You can schedule as you go.

By the way, at Bilingual America, our teachers teach from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. EST and Saturday mornings so you will always be sure to get a tutoring time that meets your needs.

#5 - More Relaxed

You can go home from work, get relaxed and enjoy your tutoring from your favorite chair. It is a lot more fun taking tutoring in casual clothes than in dress clothes. If you have a cordless telephone, you can even do tutoring from your patio while you are enjoying the sunshine!

#6 - Prepared for Real Business World

Since you learn to deal with voice, you will be better prepared for the real business world where much of what we do is by telephone. Also, if someone happens to be out of your line of vision, you will be able to understand even if you cannot see him or her. As I have already mentioned, if you are trained in person, you will freeze when you get on the telephone. When you are trained by telephone, you do not become dependent on lipreading, gestures, etc.

#7- Consistency of Training

You can have tutoring more consistently for the same amount of money than you could by going to a school. Telephone tutoring sessions last half an hour and sessions at most schools are at least one hour in length because they have to justify having an instructor come in.

A half-hour on the telephone twice a week is more consistent, and better, than having one one-hour session a week. Of course, four half-hour sessions weekly are better than two one-hour sessions.

It is just like exercise. Which is better? Three or four times a week for a half-hour, or once or twice for an hour or two at a time? We all know that consistency is critical to the development of a new skill or habit. You'll feel like you have more attention for the same amount of time...and money!

#8 - Higher Completion Rates

Our studies show conclusively that students who take their tutoring by telephone more consistently complete a full course of study. This is due to the fact that they learn better and that they learn in an environment that meets their needs from a logistical and scheduling standpoint.

The conclusion of the matter is...

If I personally were going to take a language training course, I would want my tutoring to be by telephone. I would not do it face to face with a tutor, much less in a group class.

Chapter 8 - Eight Reasons Why Telephone Tutoring is Better Than Face to Face Tutoring



Through many years of experience, I have found that people who do tutoring by telephone, learn better, understand better, speak better, schedule more easily and complete their programs much more consistently.

This is not marketing hype. In reality, only one percent of our students in the metro Atlanta area, where we are physically located, ever come to our physical premises. We simply do not encourage coming to our Bilingual America premises for all the reasons I have shared with you in this chapter. We actually have students spanning the United States and it works very well.

It seems that our students are more concerned about learning well than seeing our smiling, beautiful faces!

Chapter 9

What to Expect From A Great Tutor

What should you expect from a great tutor?

- Results
- Consistency
- Motivation
- Direction
- Accountability
- Patience

Most people need a skilled tutor to work with them throughout the learning process in order to achieve strong results.

Here are four reasons why working with a skilled instructor is important:

1. You will build confidence in communicating with a real person.
2. You will be paced in a way that is appropriate for you.
3. You will be accountable to a skilled professional.
4. You will have a consistent resource to clarify any concerns you may have.

A great tutor will work with students within the framework of their knowledge base. It is my firm belief that the tutor should not spend tutoring sessions "spoon feeding" information to students. You do not need to have your teacher "teach" you new words, or do writing exercises with you. That can, and should, be accomplished through the use of the right kind of course materials.

What your tutor should do is to apply the knowledge that you acquire through course materials into a live and dynamic interchange. In other words, your teacher will very quickly begin speaking with you in Spanish, but within the framework of what you have learned to that point in your course materials.

As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, if you are constantly needing to ask, "¿Cómo se dice?" or "¿Qué significa?" then we have a human dictionary, not a skilled instructor.

Please understand this. Your instructor's primary responsibility is to help you develop confidence in the use of the knowledge that you develop in well-structured course materials. This balance needs to exist in any truly results-driven training process.

I always tell our teachers, "you can measure your greatness as a Spanish tutor by your slowest learners. If you can get them to learn, you are great. If you can only get decent learners to learn, you are good. If you can only get great learners to learn, you are not very good at all as a tutor."

Great tutors are trained, not born! There are very few people who are naturally great instructors.

So, where will you find a great tutor? At a school that has well thought out training and learning systems for their instructors!

You see, a tutor is only as good as the learning system implemented. If the instructor is using books that have poor training systems, that is how good the tutor becomes. It is that simple.

Many people think that just because people are native Spanish-speakers they can tutor them to learn Spanish. Nothing could be further from the truth. Just because people speak Spanish does not mean they know how to "teach" Spanish. I can drive a car but if I were you, I would not hire me to do repair work on your car!

Bilingual America tutors are excellent because our training systems for our tutors are superior. We employ native Spanish-speakers who have strong people skills, and a strong desire to see their students succeed. We then train our teachers in the art of tutoring. In fact, before people can ever tutor at Bilingual America they must pass a very comprehensive exam regarding the tutoring process. These people must then follow instructions "to the letter" when working with students.

Our tutors are held accountable through...

- Taping of all tutoring sessions. (we grade them!)
- Reporting of each session via the Internet.
- Receiving student evaluations throughout the learning process.

So, how will you know if you have a great teacher? Your tutor will:

- Give you a strong sense that, "I am progressing."
- Consistently keep you motivated.
- Implement a plan and consistently execute that plan.
- Be prepared and keep things moving.
- Not allow you to control the tutoring sessions because your tutor is the expert, not you!
- Be able to carry full conversations in Spanish with you, working within the framework of what you have learned to that point in your courses materials. This is critical because it keeps you from "trying to talk in Spanish" using words and structures that you have not learned to that point.
- Will allow you to "succeed" in the process. You will never be defeated or made to feel like you are stupid.
- Will keep you positive about learning Spanish.
- Will adjust to your scheduling needs, not you to your tutor's.

I can guarantee you one thing. if you have a Bilingual America instructor, you will have a well-trained and effective instructor. In fact, if you ever have a tutoring session that you believe to be ineffective or unprofessional, we will give you that session *free* as well as an additional session at *no charge*. That is how confident we are about our tutoring process.

Chapter 10

What to Expect From Great Course Materials

I cannot tell you how many countless hours I have spent reviewing Spanish courses. The only one I would sincerely recommend is called *Spanish Power*. Of course, I wrote that course and teach it.

I know this sounds self-serving but I do not honestly believe that there is a better Spanish training course anywhere in the country. With that fairly heady introduction to this chapter, allow me to explain to you what I believe makes for *great* training materials.

Let's start off with a premise. The premise is that you should develop the majority of your knowledge of the Spanish language through your course materials. I touched on this in the last chapter when I spoke about the tutoring process. I said then that the primary purpose of tutoring is to apply the knowledge you develop through the use of the right kind of course materials.

The purpose of this chapter is to give you a foundation as it relates to what you should expect from course materials you use to learn Spanish. As always, I will tell you what to expect and why.

Ready? Let's get started.

Here are the top *eight* things you should expect from outstanding course materials:

#1 - Great course materials contain great memory systems.

Memory Systems are built around the twin towers of repetition and retroactivity. Of course, really great memory systems also incorporate elements of relaxation and the ridiculous as I mentioned in an earlier chapter.

Any excellent course will contain a built-in memory system that will virtually insure that everything you study will be retained in long-term memory. I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that I review a lot of Spanish courses. I do this for two reasons; first, to see if they are doing anything really well that we should implement, second, to see what they are doing poorly so that we can seize an opportunity.

I have not reviewed *any* courses available on the common market that contain strong long-term memory systems. Well-structured course materials will contain a built-in memory system. That system will tell you exactly what to do and how to do it. It will even tell you how many times you need to process information in order to store information into long-term memory. These memory systems will function for both vocabulary learning and verb structural mastery.

#2 - Great course materials will teach you how to master the language structurally without bogging you down into traditional views of "tense" and "conjugation."

In two earlier chapters we discussed "the fruit and the root" and "the power of patterns." All of what I said in those two chapters applies here. If you properly learn the use of patterns in the language, and if you properly learn how to plug vocabulary into these patterns, you are way ahead of almost all Spanish learners.

Really great course materials are able to teach you structure in innovative and effective ways that allow you to actually put the language together for yourself. Some people say, "Well, I just want to learn to converse. I do not want to learn structure and grammar." Please understand that if you do not learn structure correctly, you will always sound like a four-year-old when you speak in Spanish. Structure is your friend. The key is learning it in a way that keeps you out of all the technical jargon, yet is truly effective.

I mentioned a tool I developed several years ago called, "The Real Spanish Path." It teaches 12 of the 15 patterns in one fell swoop. We then take about eight lessons of our Basic Level to solidify these patterns. It is great because by the end of the Basic Level you have learned to use around 70 percent of the structure of the language you will ever use no matter how proficient you become.

#3 - Great course materials are ordered and systematic.

Really well-structured course materials are not "self-study." They are ordered and systematic. They lay out clear and objective steps you should complete within certain time limits. They tell you what to do, when, how, and how many times to do something.

You should use course materials containing the following elements in each lesson plan:

1. Pronunciation
2. Vocabulary and Structural Memory Systems
3. Structural Development Teaching
4. Writing and Revision Exercises
5. Speech Flow Development

#4 - Great course materials are accompanied by professional tutoring and support services.

This pretty much eliminates every program in the bookstores and catalogues. I do not know of one "off the shelf" program that offers you professional tutoring and support that directly correlates with the learning materials.

#5 - Great course materials are balanced. They teach you how to read, write, speak and understand Spanish.

Some people say that they only want to speak and do not care about reading and writing. First of all, writing is absolutely the best thing you can do to retain information and should be used extensively in any quality learning program. Secondly, once you learn the language there is no question that you will want to be able to read and write well. You simply cannot say that you "communicate well in Spanish" if you cannot read, write, speak, and understand.

Permit me to say something else about the importance of the writing process in learning a language. In our Spanish Power course materials, we will teach you a way to do writing exercises so you are properly combining the senses of seeing, touching, hearing and saying. By doing this you will achieve up to 90 percent retention on all information processed.

The popular marketing slogan used for many language courses, "just 30 minutes a day in your car for 30 days and you'll be conversing in Spanish" is marketing propoganda. It is simply not true and you should not be taken in by it. Quality courses optimize the writing process because writing information in the correct ways allows for the highest retention rate of material of any other learning technique.

#6 - Great course materials teach you how to put the language together for yourself.

With excellent course materials you will learn to put sentences together for yourself rather than memorizing pre-written conversations and dialogues. So many programs make the terrible mistake of including a lot of dialogues of things like "Pedro and María in a restaurant" or "The Ramírez family in Guadalajara." Well, if all you can do is "parrot" a bunch of memorized conversations and dialogues you will be in big trouble in real life conversations.

As I mentioned earlier in this booklet, you need to learn to paint your own pictures, not make a cheap copy. When you complete a quality course, you will be able to effectively form *BILLIONS* of sentences for yourself through the power of combining words with patterns.

#7 - Great course materials teach you to develop "speech flow" and "comprehension" in a graduated fashion.

What I mean by this is that excellent course materials *do not* expect you to hear and speak at "native" rates of speed from the very beginning. Very, very few adult learners can handle native rate of speed at the beginning of a program.

Speech flow can developed through a technique called "Paced Reading." This is a drama technique that is used by actors and actresses who want to learn to speak like people from other cultures. Paced Reading should be graduated. In other words, Basic Level instruction at 50 percent of a native, Intermediate at 70 percent, Advanced at 90 percent, and Expert at 100 percent.

Paced Reading allows you to develop strong language infrastructure without the pressure of having to "talk like a native." It allows you to put your focus where it needs to be initially, rather than on speed and movement. You have heard the saying, "speed kills." If you get too much speed, too quickly, it will not kill you, but it may kill your desire to learn Spanish. Speed, comprehension, and speech flow should be introduced in a graduated fashion.

#8 - Great course materials are taught by an expert teacher.

Many courses are taught by "native speakers" who are simply employed by the company marketing the courses. Very, very few courses are actually taught by the course designer and program creator.

For what it is worth, I personally do all of the teaching on the audio portions of the Spanish Power Course Materials. This is the best way that I can assure each Bilingual America student will receive the very best instruction no matter who you are or where you are.

Several people have even called me, "America's Best Spanish Teacher." To have me teach you in person would cost you more than it would cost to get an expert lawyer! In Spanish Power you get over 200 hours of learning processes that I personally teach you. Of course, you will also have the benefit of having a skilled and certified tutor who will guide you in direct correlation with your course materials.

I can promise you that the teaching is to-the-point, no-nonsense, and highly effective. In short, you will learn and you will not be "stressed out" or "bored" by doing it.

That is what *great* course materials are all about. If you begin a course in Bilingual America's Spanish Power Training Materials, you will get all eight of these things and more. In fact, Spanish Power comes with a 45-day unconditional learning satisfaction guarantee. If you are not getting the results you expect, we will refund your money...no questions...no hassles!

Chapter 11

Mastering Pronunciation, Speech Flow and Comprehension

In the last chapter I introduced the subject of speech flow. In this chapter we will talk about how to properly develop pronunciation, speech flow and comprehension in the Spanish language.

I presently live in Atlanta, GA and frequently speak with people who say to me, "What will I sound like in Spanish with this Southern drawl?" This is an interesting question, isn't it?

The answer is...

If Spanish is learned correctly, it will not sound any different from someone in Chicago who learned Spanish pronunciation correctly. Let's talk first about pronunciation and then we will talk about speech flow. After that we will deal with the "comprehension" issue.

Development of Pronunciation:

It takes the average person four to six repetitions to properly hear and pronounce a word in a new language correctly. Of course, this should be reflected in the development of excellent course materials!

Pronunciation is a combination of hearing a sound or word correctly and then saying that sound or word correctly. There is something here that you must understand: The parts make the whole. This is true in all of learning. The parts make the whole.

In such an application I mean, as I have already said, you cannot pronounce full sentences correctly unless you learn to pronounce individual words correctly. Obviously, you cannot pronounce words correctly unless you can pronounce individual sounds correctly.

Here is some good news. There are no sounds in the Spanish language that cannot be produced by *any* English speaker. *None*.

In fact, Spanish in most cases is easier to pronounce than English.

Here's my philosophy on the development of pronunciation.

1. You should learn to pronounce new Spanish words *before* you know the meaning of those words in English and Spanish. In other words, you should concentrate *only* on the

pronunciation in Spanish without any consideration to what the word means. It does not matter what the word means at that point. It only matters that you can pronounce the word correctly. Once you learn to pronounce the word correctly, you can then learn what it means.

2. In order to pronounce well you must speak loudly when you first learn a new word. No mumbling. I know this kind of hurts the "airline" travelers, but this is a fact. If you mumble words when you first learn to pronounce them, you will solidify a poor pronunciation. It is harder to break poor pronunciation once entrenched than to learn it correctly the first time.
3. You must open your mouth widely when you are first learning to pronounce new words. This forces you to enunciate the words correctly.

The absolute worst scenario is when you have persons learning to pronounce words after they know the meaning of the words, they are softly saying the words and their mouth is for the most part closed. As some people say in the Northeastern United States, "Forget about it!" You'll never, and I do mean *never*, pronounce words correctly if you do that.

Excellent course materials will contain audios that allow you to work individually with each new word you are learning to pronounce. They will also pre-program in the number of times that you need to repeat a word in order to achieve solid pronunciation. They will not place those words within the full context of sentences and paragraphs until you have already learned to pronounce the words correctly.

Also, your course materials and tutor should pace the speed of pronunciation when you are first beginning. This way you are sure to hear the sounds correctly. With time, speed can be increased as you are ready for it and can adjust to it.

Of course, when you are also working with a skilled instructor, the tutor will work with you on a consistent basis to help you develop confidence in your "sound." One thing is sure, people who feel good about how they sound, learn faster than those who do not. The reason for this is because their level of confidence and psychological "feel" for the process is positive and upbeat.

Based on this fact, it is very important for you to develop solid pronunciation from the very beginning of a course.

Development of Speech Flow:

I have had the opportunity over the years to work a lot in the areas of communications and drama. Several years ago I learned a technique called "Paced Reading" from a drama teacher. Basically, she gave us a script and had us repeat behind her one to two syllables. She would then proceed to talk like other people from other people groups. She explained to us that this technique is frequently used by actors and actresses who desire to imitate the way someone from another country or people group sounds.

So again, you follow behind a "native" speaker about one to two syllables. This way you are close enough to hear any differences in the way the native speaks and the way you would naturally say something. You are also close enough to make an adjustment so that you do say it correctly. This is a technique that requires quite a lot of focus but if properly done it is extremely effective for the development of both accent and speech flow.

The nice thing about "paced reading" is that the rate of speed can be gradually increased. I believe, and this is based on experience over the years, that a student in a Basic Level program should be paced at about 50 percent of a native. An Intermediate Student should be paced at about 70 percent of a native, an Advanced Student around 90 percent and an Expert Level Student, 100 percent.

Sometimes with Expert Level students, I'll even go faster just to "push them to their outer limits." By stretching students, they will have an easier time with normal native speed. The key here is to allow the student to become acclimated to speed.

Developing Your Comprehension Skills:

Have you ever thought the following about Hispanics? "Wow, those people sure speak fast."

Spanish is a pretty rapid fire language when it is at "full tilt." It does move. There are several reasons for this. They are:

1. The way gender agreement works in Spanish allows for consecutive words to all end with the same letters. For example: Los carros bonitos. (The pretty cars.) Each word ends in the same two letters; "os." Well, that can produce some pretty fast speech when those "pretty cars" are all revved up!
2. Hispanics are for the most part animated people. Spanish people tend to get excited easily and this makes for some fast talking.
3. The way the mouth is positioned in Spanish is a side to side movement. You never really get down into the throat to pronounce a word like you do in English. English is a guttural language, Spanish is a romance language. Basically, people call them "romance languages" because they are smooth and flowing languages. This is due to the positioning of the mouth to produce the sounds. There are very, very few harsh sounds in Spanish.

Allow me to say something very important for you to understand.

Comprehension is the last skill that will be developed in your learning process. In fact, I do not even want a student worrying about the speed of the language until he or she is in an Advanced Level course. There is just too much to accomplish infrastructurally before then, like learning vocabulary and structure. I have met students frustrated to death because they cannot understand

the Spanish Soap Opera on Univision. Some of these people have not even finished a Basic Level Course and they are frustrated over this.

Time out.

What does not make sense about this? If you do not know enough words and you do not have a total mastery of structure, how do you expect to understand those two things put together at native rate of speed? That simply does not make sense.

I do know a lot of people who sit down to watch a TV program and they say, "I can pretty much understand that." Well, truth be known, they understand the words that sound like English words, pick up a few others and they say, "I pretty much understood that." No they didn't!

Comprehension — real comprehension happens when you already have a strong language infrastructure (words and patterns) and you have become acclimated to speed through a strong training process that includes speech flow drills and comprehension drills.

Chapter 12

Put Your Products on the Shelf!

Would you open a store with no products on the shelf? Of course not. Would you open a business without a business plan? Not if you are smart. Would you try to speak in Spanish with a native Spanish speaker without being able to speak decently? Not if you do not want to be frustrated.

Many people who are just learning the language make three really big mistakes. This may surprise you!

- They tell everyone they know they are learning Spanish.
- They start trying to talk with native Spanish speakers before they are able to carry on a decent conversation.
- They try to listen to Spanish radio stations and watch Spanish television stations as much as they can.

The main reason you should avoid these activities too soon in the learning process is because you are setting yourself up for failure. You simply do not have the knowledge base to handle these activities well. You are much better off learning the language well, with the proper kinds of learning systems, than somehow trying to "pick it up by osmosis." It does not happen that way!

If you tell everyone you know you are learning Spanish, these same people can become your worst enemies in the learning process. If they are English speakers, they will chide you and say things like, "Well, you are taking Spanish lessons, you take the phone call from Venezuela." that is pressure, amigo!

Let's say you succumb to the pressure and try to talk on the phone. You get past "hola," start to talk with the person on the other end of the phone, (who now thinks you speak Spanish), get two sentences in, and you are completely embarrassed. Well, your friends all have a good laugh on you, and you are feeling pretty rotten. Again, put your products on the shelf!

Many teachers make the mistake of telling their students to "talk with everyone you can," and "watch as much television in Spanish as possible." I am telling you for most people this is really bad advice. Please understand that I am not questioning their intent or desire to help you, I am simply saying that for most new learners this is not good advice. Psychologically, this is defeating to most people. You will start watching a Spanish television program, get frustrated and tell yourself something like, "Wow, these people talk so fast, I don't think I'll ever understand them." You are not ready for native speed!

As soon as you start creating a negative mindset about the process, things will get more and more difficult for you. My personal opinion is that you are much better off waiting to talk with people or watch TV until you at least develop a decent level of proficiency in a "safe" environment.

Why do babies stay nine months (in an ideal scenario) in their mother's wombs? Why do baby chicks stay inside an egg until they grow more mature? Why do people go to college before entering the professional workforce? One word and one word only...PREPARATION.

Think about the powerful elements of the following situation. Let's say that Marty owns a construction company and he wants to be able to talk with his Spanish-speaking laborers. Instead of making a big deal of "I am learning Spanish" he does not say a word. When he has properly learned and is able to communicate well he opens his mouth and starts talking to them in Spanish.

Imagine their shock! First, they are afraid because they wonder how much he understood when they were talking behind his back. They say, "Caramba, no sabíamos que usted hablaba español. ¡Habla muy bien!" That means, "Wow, we didn't know that you spoke Spanish. You speak really well!"

Will Marty ever fear opening his mouth again? No way. The reason is because when he opened his doors for business he had his products on the shelf. He was *prepared* and because he was prepared he was successful.

My favorite story is about a student we had in New York City who was the boyfriend of a Puerto Rican lady. He didn't tell her that he was learning Spanish and after he learned he took her out to dinner and spoke only in Spanish with her. According to him, she was absolutely flabbergasted!

Amigo, some of the best advice I can give you is to get into a *great* Spanish learning program. Do not tell everyone what you are doing, and wait until you can speak before you start speaking with people outside of your tutor. If you do not do that, you run the unnecessary risk of being defeated before you ever really start.

In closing, it does take some discipline to follow this advice, but it is more than worth it.

Many years ago I learned a powerful two-word definition for the word "discipline." It is "**delayed gratification.**" Think about it!

Chapter 13

What To Do When You Already Speak Some Spanish

(Even if you do not speak any Spanish yet, you will learn some really important things in this chapter so stay with me.)

Is your Spanish full of potholes?

If you have ever been to Latin America you may have noticed many of our roads are full of potholes. This is a major topic of discussion among Latin Americans in Latin America. The roads are passable, but they are hard on your car after a while. If you know some Spanish but cannot speak well, then you may have some "language potholes."

Most Intermediate Level Spanish Speakers have "potholes" all over their conversations.

You get past "Buenos días, mi nombre es _____" and by the time you get to the second or third sentence of a conversation you start to hit these "potholes." By the end of the conversation you are either frustrated, or at the very least tired from all the wear and tear, not to mention the stress that a full-length conversation in Spanish puts on you.

Maybe you do not have enough words to support a "real" Spanish conversation, maybe you are still struggling with "verb conjugations," or maybe you are having trouble with the "speed" of the language. Maybe you are struggling with all three!

Whatever the case, there is a solution for your need.

I have had students who have gotten upset because they spent four years in high school and college trying to learn Spanish but never really got it to where they could speak well. Then they finally found out how easy this really is.

I also have had students who have spent a lot of money on private instruction who afterwards found out they were paying a lot of money to a teacher who didn't really know how to teach this language. I cannot tell you how many times I've heard, "I wish I had known this before!" Well, better late than never!

Let's dig in...

Do you "recognize" or "generate?"

Intermediate speakers typically struggle with being able to use vocabulary words and verb patterns quickly in a conversational mode. If you see things in writing, or if someone says something to you slowly enough, you understand most everything.

The problem occurs when you have to create sentences on your own. What is happening is that your ability to recognize the language is stronger than your ability to generate the language for yourself.

Why people struggle to remember vocabulary words

Here are several different reasons why people struggle to use vocabulary well in conversations. They are:

- Words were learned through "dialogue based learning." This includes immersion based training.
- Words didn't get enough repetitions for a long enough period of time, thus cementing them into long-term memory.
- Words were learned from Spanish to English rather than English to Spanish.
- Words were learned through "image based learning," that is matching objects and pictures with the words themselves.
- Words were not learned with the proper balance of nouns, verbs and adjectives.
- Words learned were not "universal" in nature. Words were not learned from the main areas of speech that most people engage in.

Why people struggle using Spanish verbs

There are many reasons why learners struggle to use "verb structure" well in conversation, here they are...

- Verb structure was learned calling different "tenses" by name. (imperfect, subjunctive, etc.)
- Verb structure was learned in a "Spanish only" environment, thus forcing you to try to learn Spanish structure from Spanish structure itself.
- Verb structure in Spanish was not "linked" to the same English structure thus allowing you to easily move from one *equivalent* to the other.
- Verb structure was learned by learning different *conjugations* in a lesson by lesson format, rather than in a big-picture, global format based on patterns.

If you learned to call verb patterns things like, "imperfect," "preterit," "simple present," "subjunctive" and those types of names, you learned verb patterns in stagnant forms and will be forever limited unless you change how you view verb structure. See Chapters 1 and 2 of this booklet to refresh your memory on how verb structure is best learned.

I detest words like "conjugate," "tense," "irregular verbs," "subjunctive," "past perfect" or anything else in that vein. The goal here is to be able to communicate well in Spanish, not to get a degree in syntactical analysis.

Balance is Critical!

We humans are given to extremes. We tend to swing from one extreme position to the other. Some of us are in desperate need of balance in our lives. So it is with language training.

In language, you either hear people saying, "The only way to learn is to learn like a child in an immersion approach" or "You have to learn grammar in a traditional college way if you are ever really going to learn verb conjugations." Both are two different extremes and neither one is correct!

There is middle ground, there is a balance. The fact is that you *do* need to learn structure (notice I did not say "grammar"), and you do need to learn how to implement structure into a dynamic and free conversation. Let's face it, if you do not learn structure well you will never speak well in a dynamic conversation.

Here's the MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION...

How do you fix a road with "potholes?"

There are only two ways and one of these two ways will be your solution.

- Fill in the potholes.
- Resurface the road.

What does this mean in real life? It means that for you to become an Expert Level Speaker you have two options. Either someone will have to find every place where you are weak in Spanish, help you do the remedial work and then move you to Advanced and Expert Level training. Two, you will need to start again at the beginning and program the language in correctly this time. I can tell you, (and this is based on *a lot* of experience), that most Intermediate Level speakers should definitely resurface the road rather than trying to fill in the holes — that is, go with option two.

There are several reasons for this, they are:

1. When you resurface the road everything is smooth and we make sure that we do not miss any holes. The other way, you never really know what gaps are still there.
2. When you resurface the road you get a total reprogramming of the entire language. (This is much more than a "review.")
3. When you resurface the road (correctly) we can make sure that you truly have long-term memory of everything in the language and can generate the language for yourself quickly.
4. When you resurface the road you do not waste time and energy trying to find out what you cannot do well. You invest your time into making sure that you can do *everything* well. I have people all the time who say, "Well, I do not want to start with the Basic Level."

Here's the problem... most people who describe themselves as Intermediate Level speakers still have structural weaknesses in things that we have in our Basic Level courses.

If you can show through an objective evaluation that you really do not need to go back and reprogram the language, then I am fine with that. I just would not want to put you in Intermediate, Advanced or Expert Level course materials knowing that you are not ready.

I had a student one time who had a Masters degree in Spanish and she could not do things well in our late Intermediate Level Course Materials! We started with the Basic Level (because of her background, she did it quickly) and then went all the way through the Expert Level materials. When she was done she was really, really happy with the result. And this is, after all, the whole point, to get a strong result.

Here are the steps to take if you want to speak well in "native level" conversations.

1. Take an objective evaluation of your present level Spanish skills.

Before this evaluation do *not study* or review any Spanish. If you do, you will not get a true indicator of your real skills since you are "cramming" information, rather than getting a true evaluation of your present skill level.

This is a *free* telephone evaluation for prospective students with Bilingual America.

To schedule your Present Skills Evaluation please call us toll-free at 1.888.850.1555. Please remember this evaluation is for prospective students only.

2. Have a program designed for you that will meet your specific needs.

Neither of us know what your "specific needs" are right now, but we will find out. When we do, we can custom tailor your program to meet your exact desires.

3. Get started..."mañana" is always too late!

Capture your motivation and take advantage of the many opportunities available to people who can really communicate well in both Spanish and English. You are already half way down the road. All we need to do is "get you over the hump" and "past the bumps" by assessing and leveraging your present knowledge. We will resurface the road so you are riding on a smooth language infrastructure.

Chapter 14

Cultural Training and Language

We now come to the last, but certainly not the least important chapter in this booklet. It will not be a long chapter, but it will be a very important chapter to apply.

Please understand the following:

It is possible to communicate in Spanish very well and, at the same time, communicate very poorly with Spanish speakers.

You need to develop cultural understanding and awareness or you will be “walking on one leg.” You are not truly bilingual simply because you “speak Spanish.”

You are truly bilingual when you can apply a deep understanding of the Hispanic people and culture to your conversations with Spanish-speaking people. This will allow you to win their hearts.

For me, learning Spanish is a means to an end. The true end goal is to communicate well with our people, to appreciate and love our people and culture and to make the most of each relationship that you have with Hispanics.

All language training should also include a serious cultural training component.

What good does it do to simply “speak” the language if you do not understand how people think or why they do certain things?

Language Training and Cultural Training should run on parallel tracks. Because of this we typically run two courses simultaneously.

1. Spanish Language Training

This is done with our *Spanish Power* courseware accompanied with professional tutoring.

2. Cultural Training

This is done with our *Success with Hispanics* course.

The *Success with Hispanics* course is an A to Z cultural training course. You will learn who we are, how we think, how to direct Hispanics in the workplace, how to do business with Hispanics and much, much more.

The feedback on this course is absolutely incredible. Students love it! There are 36 modules in this particular course and each module takes about 12 to 15 minutes to complete. We suggest that a student complete one module in the *Success with Hispanics* course for each lesson that is done in the *Spanish Power* course.

Learning to communicate "in Spanish" takes the greater time commitment. That, however, in no way diminishes the importance of learning to understand and communicate with our people on a cultural level.

I love our culture and I love our people. I believe that the Hispanic culture is extremely rich and can teach the average English-speaking (soon to be Spanish-speaking also!) North American to have a deeper appreciation for family, friendship and faith. Saying that, I also believe we have our flaws and our weaknesses as a culture. Every culture does.

In order for you to truly appreciate and understand the Hispanic people you need to have an honest understanding of both the beautiful and the not so beautiful in our culture. I commit to you that the cultural training you receive in the *Success with Hispanics* course will be lively, inspiring, applicable, and, above all, honest.

Closing Thoughts

Thank you for investing some of your valuable time with me. I hope reading this booklet has been both helpful and motivating for you.

The things I have said here are from my heart and my head. They are borne from experience and professional expertise. They are given to you from a sincere desire to see you succeed in your desire to communicate well with Spanish-speaking people.

I said at the beginning that my goal was to prepare you to make an educated decision regarding your Spanish training provider. From time to time, as you know, I promoted the institute I founded, Bilingual America.

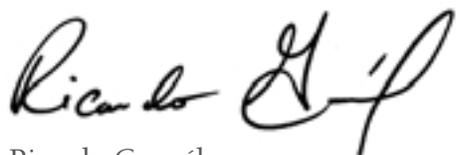
I would like to personally invite you to experience absolutely the best Spanish training processes in the world. I sincerely believe that. Not because I started the school but because Bilingual America evolved from a sincere desire and passion to build and implement learning and training systems that would get great real language acquisition results.

If what I described in this booklet "rings true" with you, I invite you to become a part of the Bilingual America family. If not, I respect your choice and wish you the best of luck. You may be thinking, "What is my next step? I would like to move forward."

Here are a four action steps to take:

1. If you haven't already done so, complete the Language Learning Aptitude Assessment at:
http://www.bilingualamerica.com/assessment/a_waccess.asp
2. If you have existing Spanish skills and would like to have a free Proficiency Evaluation, please call us toll-free at 1.888.850.1555.
3. Go through the Interactive Program Design process with me on our Internet site. This includes 20 minutes of audio and two worksheets that you download. The link is:
<http://www.bilingualamerica.com/newstudent.htm>
4. If you are ready to start and would like to purchase in our secure Web Store please visit us at:
<http://www.bilingualamerica.com/main/purchase.asp>

We look forward to serving you!
A sus órdenes, (At your service,)



Ricardo González
Founder and Executive Director
Bilingual America