A Spanish Teaching Method that Reaches All Students

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EDFI 611: The Curriculum
November 28, 2007
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A Spanish Teaching Method that Reaches all Students

From the perspective of student, observer, and teacher I have witnessed many problems in the process of learning a foreign language. From each of these perspectives I have consistently noticed a lack of efficacy in the educational methods. It is rare for a student to be able to communicate effectively in the language studied upon graduating high school. I believe that many factors lead to this problem of inefficient foreign language learning and I will attempt to identify many of them (although by no means is the list intended to be all inclusive). Some of the problems are 1) lack of establishing a solid foundation in the language, 2) a lack of cumulative learning opportunities, 3) a lack of repetition, 4) a lack of productive review opportunities 5) a lack of real life application, 6) a reliance on rote memorization, 7) a lack of accountability for the students to actually use the language, 8) minimal student motivation, 9) low expectations for the students to actually accomplish the task of learning the language, and 10) boredom, which is perhaps the most detrimental of all.

In my project I will begin to address some of these issues and present options to combat these problems related to common foreign language teaching and learning methods. Using Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligence as my guide I will present ways to teach Spanish as a Foreign Language to each student in the classroom in an effective way, irregardless of their preferred learning styles, in order to establish a solid foundation and allow students to cumulatively build upon those foundations through constant repetition and effective review. I will use real life experiences and concept building techniques to help the students learn vocabulary and grammar. By holding students accountable to apply their newly acquired Spanish language skills, I will provide a system where a student’s own learning will promote
intrinsic motivation; whereas extrinsic motivation will be provided by the teacher’s expectations that the student will be able to communicate effectively in Spanish when the course is completed. Lastly and most importantly, the material will be presented in such a way that boredom will be greatly diminished through the use of paintings, poetry, music, games, drama, sports, stories, real life examples, hands on activities, etc., not only in the classroom, but also at home.

The foreign language education goal is more than just learning the content. Learning how to learn is also important since one is likely to encounter new situations later in life which will require further understanding. Students will be encouraged to look up information on their own, especially for review. One problem with traditional textbooks is the linear process and the implications that occur after each chapter is completed. As teachers and students we often “complete” or “finish” a chapter; however, since this information is the foundation for future learning, a system should be in place that encourages a student to “go back” to previously studied material, without feeling like he or she is regressing. In learning Spanish as a foreign language each unit will invariably contain multiple grammatical ideas. The teacher must determine which grammar lessons are necessary to review either independently or as a group, depending on the needs of the particular classroom. Sometime group review leads to boredom in some of the students, so how could we decrease that boredom? I propose that by teaching students to learn for themselves by setting up a system that facilitates independent learning is essential. The role of the teacher in these cases should be to assist the student until e or she is able to independently find and learn the necessary information.

I will encourage a teaching environment that blends three major design theories: Experience Centered Design, Broad Fields Design, and Life Situation Design. According to Ornstein and Hunkins (2004), an experience centered design is one that significantly takes into
account the learners’ interests giving each student the power to select from various options in order to shape his or her own learning in the context of the teacher’s structure. The Broad Fields Design allows students to learn the content by establishing relationships within the current lesson. This can be facilitated through clustering the content material in themes in order to help the students make connections and relate these connections to previously studied material (Ornstein & Hunkins). Applying the content to a student’s practical world is always a challenge, yet one that students’ frequently present to teachers: “Why do we have to learn this?” is such a dreaded attitude by teachers, but a poor answer to such a question is even more dreaded by the student. I believe that a Life-Situations Design component is essential to motivating a student in any subject. Ornstein and Hunkins explain a Life-Situations Design as one that emphasizes activities that sustain and enhance life, assist in raising children, encourage social and political activism, and enhance leisure, tasks, and emotions. By using this approach a student will see the relevance of the content and apply it to community life.

Howard Gardner has demonstrated (Shepard, 2004) that children learn by using a combination of all eight intelligences. Clearly, the students are likely to demonstrate stronger abilities in certain intelligences than others. Since the goal is to teach to all students, this program will provide an environment that will assist and insure that a teacher will address each of Gardner’s eight styles of intelligence in the teaching and learning process. To facilitate this goal, it is important to identify those eight learning styles. The following summary of Gardner’s Multiple Intelligence Theory is a conglomerate of what was written by Armstrong (1994) and Shepard:
1. **Verbal/Linguistic**: This intelligence leads to the ability to think in words and use language to express and appreciate meanings.

*Examples of verbal/linguistic activities*: books, tapes, writing tools, paper, diaries, dialogue, discussion, debate, writing stories, reading stories to young people at library, etc.

2. **Logical/Mathematical**: This intelligence leads to the ability to calculate, quantify, consider hypotheses, perform mathematical operations, perceive relationships, and make connections using abstract symbolic thought and sequential reasoning.

*Examples of logical-mathematical activities*: hands on experiments, science materials, props, trips to the planetarium and science museum, problem solving scenarios, ranking an order, comparing, making and using maps, etc.

3. **Visual/Spatial**: This intelligence leads to the ability to think in three dimensions and use images and pictures, spatial reasoning, artistic skills, and an active imagination.

*Examples of visual/spatial activities*: art, building blocks, video, movies, slides, photographs, imagination games, mazes, puzzles, illustration books, trips to art museums, etc.

4. **Bodily/Kinesthetic**: This intelligence leads to the ability to manipulate objects, tone physical skills, and effectively use somatic sensations.

*Examples of bodily/kinesthetic activities*: role play, drama, movement, building things, sports and physical games, tactile experiences, hands-on learning, etc.
5. **Musical/Rhythmic**: This intelligence leads to the ability to learn through rhythms, tones, pitches, timbres, and melodies which allow one to recognize, create, reproduce, and reflect on music.

*Examples of musical/rhythmic activities:* sing-along time, trips to concerts, playing music at home and school, composing songs and raps, using musical instruments and sound effects, etc.

6. **Interpersonal**: This intelligence leads to the ability to bounce ideas off other people and understand and interact effectively with others using non-verbal and verbal communication.

*Examples of interpersonal activities:* interaction with friends, mentors/apprenticeships, repeat-after-me activities, paraphrasing others’ comments, participating in group games, social gatherings, community events, clubs, service learning, etc.

7. **Intrapersonal**: This intelligence leads to the ability to learn in relation to his or her own needs, feelings, and goals, to understand oneself, to plan and direct one’s life.

*Examples of intrapersonal activities:* journaling, secret places, time alone, self-paced projects, choices, etc.

8. **Naturalist**: This intelligence leads to the ability to learn through nature and natural forms and to be able to survive.

*Examples of naturalist activities:* access to nature and/or tools for investigating nature, opportunities for interacting with animals, sketching, photographs, hiking etc.
Summary of the teaching and learning process

Each unit’s lesson plan is based on that unit’s power point presentation. The presentation is set up in such a way where the class takes multiple tours of each unit. Each tour focuses on one of the objectives identified on the first slide. The teacher should print out the “Notes Pages” of the presentation, which serves as a guide for the lesson and provides sample questions for each tour. After completing the last tour, a formal or informal evaluation can be given (either collectively or individually). The last slide of the presentation provides one sample evaluation. Finally, the students should complete their autonomous learning/independent study projects to reinforce the content covered in that unit.

In the project description section of each unit, page or lesson references from the textbook Español: Texto Principiante e Intermediado, Pappalardo, D. (unpublished) will be given to help students review or learn material independently. The teacher and students should supplement this material, as needed, with translation dictionaries, additional textbooks, lectures (using the whiteboard-style, either in groups or individually), etc.

In order to assure that there is adequate representation of all of Gardner’s Intelligence Styles in each unit and to identify the activities that address those styles, a learning style checklist will be presented at the beginning of each lesson in the Overview Section. Any activity listed that is underlined should be presented to the entire class in a lecture format. Activities that are written in italics are the optional activities (Δ 1-Δ 8) from which the students can choose for their Autonomous Learning/ Independent Study Project requirement. Additional activities (Δ 9-Δ 10) that combine more than one learning style may also be chosen. The students’ project descriptions are available under the Project Descriptions section for each unit. Handouts are available (if applicable) in the Worksheets folder.
Unit One: El Abecedario

Overview

Any activity listed below that is underlined should be presented by the teacher as needed. Activities that are written in italics are the optional activities (Δ 1-Δ 8) from which the students can choose in order to complete their Autonomous Learning/Independent Study requirement. Additional activities (Δ 9-Δ 10) that combine more than one learning style can also be chosen. The students’ project descriptions are available under the Project Descriptions section for each unit. Handouts are available (if applicable) in the Worksheets folder.

Learning Style Checklist:

Δ 1. Linguistic: slide show presentation, supplemental textbook, whiteboard lecture, worksheets, word finds,

Δ 2. Logical-Mathematical: mathematical crossword puzzles, arithmetic problems, counting activities

Δ 3. Spatial: slide show presentation, make flashcards

Δ 4. Bodily: show and tell, clay sculpting

Δ 5. Musical: slide show presentation, compose Spanish alphabet song, sing along to a song

Δ 6. Interpersonal: playing hangman, group flashcards

Δ 7. Intrapersonal: quiet corner

Δ 8. Naturalist: slide show presentation, nature hunt
Additional Activities:

Δ 9. personal dictionary: Linguistic, Spatial, Intrapersonal

Δ 10. word finds: Linguistic, Spatial

Δ 11. word soups: Linguistic, Spatial, Mathematical

Δ 12. design a crossword puzzle: Linguistic, Spatial, Mathematical
Unit One: El Abecedario

Objectives

A. Content: At the end of the lesson students will be able to perform, either independently or by using texts, dictionaries, or other resources, the following skills:

1) identify all the letters of the alphabet and have working usage of their phonetic sounds
2) understand the concept of stresses and accents
3) identify feminine and masculine nouns
4) use nouns in singular and plural forms
5) identify any color
6) identify the numbers 1-20

B. Autonomous Learning/ Independent Study Project: Students must complete 4 units of practice activities that represent at least four of the different learning styles. Certain activities that combine more than one learning style and/or are more time consuming may count for more than one unit. At the end of the lesson students should be able to demonstrate knowledge of at least twenty vocabulary nouns and describe those nouns using colors and numbers.

C. Language Awareness: Since during the slide show presentation more vocabulary will be used to present the information than what is included in the formal lesson, students should be exposed to the following:

1) the verb “to be”
2) subject pronouns
3) common phrases such as What is your name?, hello, goodbye, good morning, etc.
Unit One: El Abecedario

Project Descriptions: Autonomous Learning/ Independent Study

Instructions: Students must complete at least four activities which include at least four different intelligence styles. For activities 1-7, please refer to the worksheets folder. Remember to refer to your textbook, Español: Principiantes e Intermediado (Pappalardo, D. (unpublished) to assist with grammar rules and vocabulary. Pages 1-6, 8-9, 12-19, 23 may be particularly helpful.

2. *word finds:* Complete word find worksheet.
3. *mathematical crossword puzzles:* Complete mathematical crossword puzzle handout
5. *counting activities:* Complete counting activities worksheet.
6. *play hangman:* With one or two other classmates, using the hangman worksheets, play at least ten rounds of documented hangman. Pronounce the letters in Spanish only when guessing the letters. After the vocabulary word is guessed correctly (or not guessed correctly) identify the word and
7. *word soups:* Complete word soup worksheet.
8. *make flashcards:* Draw between 5 and 20 flashcards (quantity depends on detail, skill level, and sincere effort). Be prepared to present the flashcards to somebody including the name of the object, how to write the word in singular and plural form, colors associated with each object, and it’s gender. *Extra credit or extra units may be earned by having your flashcards chosen to be laminated and added to the class collection.
9. show and tell: Bring in at least ten objects and be prepared to present them to somebody in class by including the name of the object, how to write the word in singular and plural form, colors associated with each object, and it’s gender. Photos of the objects are also acceptable. *Extra credit or extra units may be earned by submitting exceptional, unique, and previous unattained objects to be used for future class learning opportunities.

10. clay (or another medium) sculpting: Sculpt between 5 and 20 sculptures (quantity depends on detail, skill level, and sincere effort). Be prepared to present the sculptures to somebody including the name of the object, how to write the word in singular and plural form, colors associated with each object, and it’s gender. Photos of the sculpture may also be acceptable if there is a shortage of clay. *Extra credit or extra units may be earned by creating a professional sculpted work and donating it to the class for future learning opportunities.

11. compose Spanish alphabet song: Using instruments or singing acappella, alone or with one partner, compose an alphabet song in Spanish. *Extra credit or extra units may be earned by recording an exceptional song and submitting it electronically.

12. sing along to a song: Choose one of the songs in the presentation and sing along to it solo or with one partner in front of the class. *Extra credit or extra units may be earned by memorizing the song or demonstrating exceptional musical talent and/or creativity.

13. group flashcards: Using at least thirty flashcards that have already been made, sit with one to four other classmates and quiz each other with flashcards using repetition, timing contests, and one on one competitions if desired. Minimal amount of time to earn a unit is thirty minutes.

14. quiet corner: Go to the quiet corner, unoccupied table or floor space, or stay at your desk and study in the manner of your choice in silence for at least twenty minutes.
15. **nature hunt**: Retrieve at least ten objects from nature and be prepared to present them to somebody in class by including the name of the object, how to write the word in singular and plural form, colors associated with each object, and it’s gender. Photos of the objects are also acceptable. *Extra credit or extra units may be earned by submitting exceptional, unique, and previous unattained photos to be used for future presentations. Note: public domain must be given along with the electronic copy of the photo.

16. **personal dictionary**: Select at least twenty vocabulary words. Write the word and if possible draw, sketch, or cut and paste the word then describe/define the object in your own words using English, Spanish, or ‘Spanglish’. In parenthesis identify its gender. At the end of the definition, write the plural form. *Extra credit or extra units may be earned by exceptional work or by identifying how many letters are in each word and which colors are associated with the word.

17. **design a crossword puzzle**: Using at least twenty vocabulary words create a crossword puzzle with answer sheet. Clues can be given in English, Spanish, or ‘Spanglish’, but translations are not acceptable. Below are examples for the vocabulary word is “perro.”

   1) Best option is description in Spanish=› Un animal con cuatro patas que ladra.
   2) Second best option is description in ‘Spanglish’=› Un animal with cuatro legs that barks.
   3) Third best option is a description in English =› An animal that barks.
   4) Unacceptable option =› Spanish for dog.

*Extra credit or extra project units may be earned by submitting an electrical copy of exceptional work for future class usage. Note: The following must be clearly visible on the printable version of the document to be eligible for extra credit...

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Unit Two: (this has not been done yet, ignore the following)

Overview

Any activity listed below that is underlined should be presented by the teacher as needed. Activities that are written in italics are the optional activities (∆ 1-∆ 8) from which the students can choose in order to complete their Autonomous Learning/Independent Study requirement. Additional activities (∆ 9-∆ 10) that combine more than one learning style can also be chosen. The students’ project descriptions are available under the Project Descriptions section for each unit. Handouts are available (if applicable) in the Worksheets folder.

Learning Style Checklist:

∆ 1: Linguistic: slide show presentation, supplemental textbook, whiteboard lecture, worksheets, word finds,

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∆ 3. Spatial: slide show presentation, make flashcards

∆ 4. Bodily: show and tell, clay sculpting

∆ 5. Musical: slide show presentation, compose Spanish alphabet song, sing along to a song

∆ 6. Interpersonal: playing hangman, group flashcards

∆ 7. Intrapersonal: quiet corner

∆ 8. Naturalist: slide show presentation, nature hunt
Additional Activities:

A. *personal dictionary*: Linguistic, Spatial, Intrapersonal

B. *word finds*: Linguistic, Spatial

C. *word soups*: Linguistic, Spatial, Mathematical

D. *design a crossword puzzle*: Linguistic, Spatial, Mathematical
Unit Two:

Objectives

A. Content: At the end of the lesson students will be able to perform, either independently or by using texts, dictionaries, or other resources, the following skills:

1) the verb “to be”
2) subject pronouns
3) common phrases

B. Autonomous Learning/Independent Study: Students must complete 4 units of practice activities that represent at least four of the different learning styles. Certain activities that combine more than one learning style and/or are more time consuming may count for more than one unit. At the end of the lesson students should be able to demonstrate knowledge of at least ... plus all information learned in prior lessons.

C. Language Awareness: Since during the slide show presentation more vocabulary will be used to present the information than what is included in the formal lesson, students should be exposed to the following:

1)
Unit Two:

Project Descriptions: Autonomous Learning/ Independent Study

Instructions: Students must complete at least four activities which include at least four different intelligence styles. For activities 1-7, please refer to the worksheets folder. Remember to refer to your textbook, Español: Principiantes e Intermediado (Pappalardo, D. (unpublished) to assist with grammar rules and vocabulary. Pages 1-6, 8-9, 12-19, 23 may be particularly helpful.

1. practice worksheets: Complete practice worksheet.

2. word finds: Complete word find worksheet.

3. mathematical crossword puzzles: Complete mathematical crossword puzzle handout

4. arithmetic problem: Complete math problems worksheet.

5. counting activities: Complete counting activities worksheet.

6. play hangman: With one or two other classmates, using the hangman worksheets, play at least ten rounds of documented hangman. Pronounce the letters in Spanish only when guessing the letters. After the vocabulary word is guessed correctly (or not guessed correctly) identify the word and

7. word soups: Complete word soup worksheet.

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2) Second best option is description in ‘Spanglish’=> Un animal with cuatro legs that barks.

3) Third best option is a description in English => An animal that barks.

4) Unacceptable option => Spanish for dog. *Extra credit or extra project units may be earned by submitting an electrical copy of exceptional work for future class usage. Note: The following must be clearly visible on the printable version of the document to be eligible for extra credit.*

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References:

