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Kids Can Learn Spanish

By Frank Gerace

Spanish for Kids, Spanish for Children, Teach Kids Spanish

Kids Can Learn Spanish! Spanish for Children

I just got a call from my two year old granddaughter. She wanted to sing "Los Pollitos" to me. You can find this children's classic in most of the collections of songs that we are recommending.

It is perfect for hand gestures. These gestures are ideal for language learning because they imprint the sense of the words as the child recites.

The text is: (translation follows)

Los pollitos dicen pío, pío, pío cuando tienen hambre, y cuando tienen frío.

(the kids make gesture of shivering)

La gallina busca el maíz y el trigo; Le da su comida, Y le presta abrigo

(the kids make the gesture of Mom hugging her kids.)

Pío, pío, pío

(the kids should ham it up, making a little chick face!)

Translation:

The little chicks say peep, peep, peep when they are hungry and when they are cold.

The chicken looks for corn and wheat; she feeds them, and she keeps them warmn

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There are many reasons for wanting your children to learn Spanish. We want to help you find resources that will help you with Spanish for Kids.

Some parents are interested in preparing their children for life in today's world where it is important to know more than one language. This is even more important in our hemisphere where it becomes increasingly valuable to know Spanish.

Other people think of the intellectual stimulation that learning a language provides. They think that they can give their children an additional intellectual challenge in a painless way. Researcher in London, England have determined that learning a second language boosts brain power which remains throughout life.

Learning a language can be a source of pride and self esteem for the child who is fortunate enough to be exposed to learning outside of the classroom.

There are some parents who are concerned that their children grow up respecting the different heritages that surround them. Concerned that the nativist tradition of United States history is always present, many parents, not of a Spanish Speaking background, choose to prepare their children to accept and embrace the Hispanic culture they live alongside of.

Their reason to encourage their children to speak Spanish is based in part on the history of a previous group of Latin immigrants to the United States, the Italians.

"Some social critics were aware of the consequences of sudden assimilation. Mary McDowell, a social worker, wrote in 1904:

"The contempt for the experiences and languages of their parents which foreign children sometimes exhibit... is doubtless due in part to the overestimation which the school places upon speaking English. This cutting into his family loyalty takes away one of the most conspicuous and valuable traits of the Italian child.' She attributed the lawlessness of some of the immigrant children to their disrespect for their parents and therefore for all authority."

(La Storia: Five Centuries of the Italian American Experience, Mangione and Morreale, p. 222)

Reflection on this same national history, and often more importantly personal experience, moves many Hispanic parents to keep their language alive in their children. They want to preserve their heritage for their children by giving them its most evocative and powerful manifestation, the language of their forebears.

Whatever your reason for wanting your children to learn Spanish, this site will provide resources to help you. You will find suggestions and experiences of others who share your interest; you will find songs and stories in Spanish that will enthrall your children with their learning task. A list of links to related sites will lead you to other resources. And you will find that the books you need for yourself and your children have been located and placed at your disposition.

¡Buena Suerte y adelante con su cometido!

Do the Parents Know Spanish?

Although most of us agree that it is a good thing for our kids to speak Spanish, most kids in the US whose parents were born in Latin American countries do not speak Spanish well.

Even if both parents speak Spanish at home, quite often the kids answer their parents in English. Look around at your Latin friends and relatives and you will see that most give up on teaching their kids to speak

Spanish. Chicano and Puerto Rican families seem to have a little better luck than Latinos from other countries with keeping Spanish alive in their barrios but even their younger generation is losing fluency in Spanish.

However, parents who want their children to speak Spanish can go against the current and set the stage for their children to grow up speaking Spanish. It is not easy. Most families fail in their resolve but it CAN be done. Take a look at our bilingual study. How to Get Your Children to Speak Your Language/¿Cómo Lograr que Sus Hijos Hablen Su Idioma? You can find it in

<http://www.leerespoder.com/comoeng.htm>

. This report will give some hints on how to improve your chances.

But it is most important for you to get your kids reading Spanish BEFORE they learn to read in English.

Don't be afraid that it will hurt their English. Unless they are living in a closed Spanish Speaking Barrio, their English will be perfect. They will absorb it on the playground and in the school. Your job is to keep the Spanish up!

Take a look at the fuller argument presented below for the importance of your kids learning to read FIRST in Spanish.

Finally, another idea for native speakers of Spanish: You may want to review (or study it for the first time) your Spanish. I found one reference for you. Sorry it is expensive; that's because it is used as a textbook. But that will make it easy to use and will surely be complete. Take a look at *Nuevos Mundos, Spanish for Native Speakers 2nd Edition, Workbook : Curso de español para estudiantes bilingües*"

Whether or not the parents know Spanish will determine their strategy for exposing their children to the language. Obviously, parents who do not know the language well will not have native pronunciation.

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If their children learn to read Spanish, they may not have the proper pronunciation. This is a tough issue. Some might say that pronunciation is not important for children. However, why not try to expose them to the correct values of the Spanish sounds. Parents should work on their own pronunciation to model as correctly as possible for their kids.

Nevertheless, the value of the parents' involvement in reading and singing in Spanish with their children more than outweighs the disadvantage of the child hearing their poor pronunciation. Much of the damage can be remedied by having the child listen to as much Spanish spoken by native speakers as possible.

So, in general terms parents can fall into one of three groups:

1. those who know NO Spanish; 2. those who know enough to read, even poorly; 3. and those who can model correct pronunciation for their children. All these parents should make sure their children HEAR a lot of good Spanish but obviously those parents who know no Spanish will be more dependent on recordings for their children to listen to. Try to find some good audio resources. Besides the tapes and CDs you might buy or take out of the library don't forget the radio and TV. All parents should expose their children to as much passive listening of Spanish that they can. In most places there are Spanish language radio stations. TV programs from the Univision network are very widespread.

All of the above boils down to three tactics that are valid for all kinds of parents and all kinds of kids of all ages and level of Spanish.....

1. Passive Listening: Everyone should keep the Spanish radio on as much as possible. Keep the radio or TV on while the child is doing other things. It has to be the sea of sound that they swim in while

they are beginning their study of Spanish. The child doesn't have to concentrate on it; they will not be listening to try to understand. After a while they won't even hear the radio but it will be affecting them. Little by little they will begin to anticipate the rhythm of the language, even before they understand the words. They will also begin to recognize certain words.

2. Pattern Response Drills: Those parents who know some Spanish can try to run through all the permutations of the new expressions that the child learns. For example, suppose your child just learned to say, "Pedro tiene cuatro años" rather than translating from the English incorrectly, "Pedro es cuatro". Now to make this new element of the language stick, you should go on substituting different ages and the names of different people. The child will soon be able to say comfortably, "María tiene cuatro años." "Juan tiene ocho años." "Yo tengo tres años." "¿Cuántos años tienes tú?" There are many examples of these drills in most language courses but the parent can generate them herself.

3. Encouragement: Don't correct their Spanish when they speak. Don't interrupt the flow of their conversation. Don't make their speaking Spanish to be another homework assignment. It should be something special, even something "secret" in your family. Kids like the mystery and intrigue of having something special of their own. Their speaking Spanish should be a joyful, non-threatening experience. If they make mistakes in their grammar, correct their errors by using the same expression correctly a few minutes after. Don't come right back at them with the correct form or they will begin to feel

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conscious of their expression and choke off their freedom of expression.

also.....

The Alphabet: If your child is coming up on kindergarten age,

you have a wonderful opportunity to teach him or her how to read in Spanish BEFORE they learn the alphabet in English! Why? I will be brief, hoping that you will catch the direction of my thought (and my practice, with both my children and my grandson!)

Spanish is completely regular. They can learn the vowels in one sitting. This is how Spanish Speaking kids learn: from "abecedarios", the same as English Speaking children used to learn from primers. If your child learns to read (even if only simple words) Spanish first, in effect you are giving them a great head start.

You can start the child reading the simple words like Mami, comida, mesa, Papi, muñeca, carro, etc. Basically you are giving them phonics without having to buy any expensive program. You can do them no harm because, they will have a basis of the sounds that DO hold up for English; they will have achieved the satisfaction and boost to their confidence by your enthusiastic affirmation of the achievement when they read "Mami y Papi" and other simple phrases.

As they progress in English they will still have to deal with the irregularities of this language. However, they will have learned the consonants by applying them to completely foolproof regular vowels.

I said I would be brief. I am very convinced of the value of this method. I have no scientific proof, just intuition and my own experience. To work, you have to teach the child to read the alphabet in Spanish BEFORE they begin to learn in English. If they are already learning in English, it will confuse them. But if you get there FIRST, you will do them a great favor! to see a bunch of alphabet resources for you to choose from.

Toys and Games: Of lesser importance but still a possible breakthrough for certain children could be the use of toys and games (board games and others) as a way to sneak in some fun and variety into the learning process. See if Spanish Educational Toys would be useful for your child.

Computer Programs for kids If you or your child is computer savvy or if you want to combine math or science with Spanish you may want to check out the Educational Software for Children in Spanish: Reader Rabbit, Disney, Jump Start and many more...

Some First Recitations

A long time, universal, traditional favorite is "Pinpón"

Pinpón es un muñeco, muy guapo y de cartón

(the kids smile for "muy guapo", and act stiff for "de cartón")

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se lava la carita (the kids make the gesture of washing their face)

con agua y con jabón.

Pinpón dame la mano, (the kids reach out their hand)

que quiero ser tu amigo (the kids make the gesture of shaking hands)

¡Pinpón, Pinpón, Pinpón!

Translation:

Pinpón is a doll, a handsome cardboard doll. He washes his face with soap and water.

Pinpón give me your hand, I want to be your friend. Pinpón, Pinpón, Pinpón!

Another favorite of our kids was "La Mar Estaba Serena" Kids like this one because it is easy to follow. The repetition helps them learn the relation between noun and adjective as well as the vowels in Spanish.

The same verse is repeated by using all of the vowels in turn. It begins by the parent singing, "La mar estaba serena; serena estaba la mar". (The sea was calm; calm was the sea.) Then either the parent or one of several children taking turns shouts out, "¡con A!", meaning, "Let's sing it with all "a" sounds"! And you sing, "La mar estaba sarana; sarana estaba la mar."

"¡con e"! "Le mer estebe serene; serene estebe le mer".

"¡con i"! "Li mir istibi sirini; sirini istibi li mir".

"¡con o"! "Lo mor ostobo sorono; sorono ostobo lo mor".

"¡con u"! "Lu mur ustubu surunu; surunu estubu lu mur.

You'll find the kids really like this one.

English (sic!) As A Second Language

It might be interesting to do some "reverse engineering" and look at the world of those Spanish Speakers who want to learn English. Check out <http://www.leerespoder.com>

www.leerespoder.com

Reading in Spanish for the Parents

If you want to keep up your Spanish. Try to keep reading books in Spanish on a wide range of topics,

la familia, la salud, los negocios, el niño, el adolescente, etc. A good source is

<http://www.bookslibros.com/LibrosEnEspanol.php>

Good Luck! Your Kids will thank you!

Frank Gerace Ph.D has lived and worked in Latin America on Educational and Communication Projects. He currently teaches English in New York City at La Guardia College/CUNY. He invites parents interested in helping their kids learn Spanish to visit him at:

<http://www.bookslibros.com/SpanishForNinos.htm>

Dora The Explorer And Her Memorable Songs

By Low Jeremy

For the kids all over the world, watching Dora the explorer is not complete without having to hear the song that Dora sings in every episode. In all of Dora the explorer's journey, children get to enjoy the different kinds of songs that she comes up with depending on the adventure that she is in.

It should not surprise you that your child will be wanting to have his or her own CD with all of Dora's song recorded in them. Children cannot seem to have enough of the songs that they hear everyday when watching Dora. Chances are, they would want those same songs present whenever they want to hear them.

This is the influence that Dora the explorer songs have brought to kids. In any movie or show, there is always a song being sung that you can relate to. This is also the same thing with the songs from Dora the explorer.

Once kids hear them, there is a huge possibility that it will become their favorite song from then on. Being the song for Dora the explorer makes it all the more wanted.

Why are Dora the explorer songs well-liked?

One of the reason is that all the songs from Dora the explorer is especially made for pre-schooler and toddlers. The songs are made to suit their simple tastes and pleasures. These are the kinds of songs that they can easily relate to.

When creating Dora the explorer songs, the composers are taking into account that children should be able to understand them. Since these songs are for them, it is important that what the song is about should be what they do and what they like.

Not only that, Dora the explorer songs are also like an explanation of the journey and the adventure that she is in. You will notice that the songs she sings when she is happy is different from those that are sung whenever she is sad. This shows the emotions that Dora feels on her adventures. And this

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are the emotions that children are not finding it hard to understand.

It is said that when a song is played over and over again, you can easily memorize the lyrics and the melody that it has. This is the same case with Dora the explorer song. Do not be shocked when you hear your children singing a song in Spanish. Chances are, they are singing one of the songs that they hear from Dora the explorer.

Having the songs in Spanish does not make it any hard for children to understand the message and the melody that the song has. This is a part of their learning experiences. Not only will they learn important values, they also get to have basic Spanish word lesson. This is definitely one thing they will not be able to learn from school.

The popularity of Dora the explorer have made it possible for everyone toddler from any parts of the world to have memorized every word in Dora the explorer songs. By now, they might even have them memorized by heart and can probably sing them word for word when they are watching the show.

So the next time you hear your child sing a song in Spanish, do not fret. They are not really singing something they should not be. They are just singing the songs that they hear from Dora the explorer.

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