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WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS SPANISH IMMERSION PROGRAM:

Course objectives fulfilled within the classroom environment:

- to create an interest and enjoyment in foreign language learning
- to recognize the sound system of Spanish and distinguish its phonemes
- to understand and respond to simple instructions and personal questions
- to understand information relating to self and the immediate environments of home, school, and community
- to ask and answer personal questions
- to make short personal statements
- to sing songs and recite chants in Spanish
- to use formulaic phrases, e.g., *May I have the scissors?*, to interact with others
- to be introduced to a large amount of vocabulary and expressions that students will eventually remember in context when there is a communicative need
- to acquire a great pronunciation in the language
- to develop a positive attitude toward foreign cultures and people
- to inquire and explore

WHAT NOT TO EXPECT FROM THIS FOREIGN LANGUAGE COURSE:

Students, at this stage, are **not expected** to:

- spontaneously talk or ask questions in Spanish outside the proper class environment. The child can only do that when he or she feels a real need. It is usually when there is no English spoken and within the classroom environment. The child will simply not speak the language just because he or she is told to do so. We often hear "Say it in Spanish" or "Speak Spanish to me". This is not recommended.
- communicate fluently with a native speaker. The child will eventually get there, usually after years of study and commitment, but is not there yet.
- translate from Spanish to English or vice versa. Translation is a completely different task that is not taught in this course.

- come up with a word in Spanish from a word in English. For example, “How do you say _____ in Spanish?). That is considered translation.
- remember words in Spanish right after class. For example, “What did you learn today?” or “Tell me two new words you learned today”. Children are being exposed to hundreds of words in every class without being conscious of it. When parents expect their child to remember something specific, too much come to the child’s brain. It is very difficult for the child to extract one or two words only, without a real communicative need.

HOW TO ACCELERATE THE LANGUAGE LEARNING PROCESS

An average course of 1 or 2 weekly hours of language exposure equals a total of 4 or 8 days a year. As you may notice, it is very little language exposure. If you take a 4 or 8 day trip to Germany and no English is spoken around you, does that mean you learned German? Luckily you would pick up and maybe even remember only a few words. Children, because of their amazing learning ability, are able to learn a lot faster than adults. This is why the younger a child is when exposed to foreign languages, the better. We need parents to expose children to the language as much as possible outside the school. There are many ways you can do this:

- **Help your child with homework**, usually marked with a **T** for *tarea*. Review the lessons covered in class in the Bambini workbook. Ask questions about the lessons, read the lessons with your child, or have your child explain them to you.
- **Watch movies in Spanish**. Many movies have specific language learning purposes such as *Las Pistas de Blue* and *Plaza Sésamo*, among others. Other commercially produced videos can also be a powerful stimulus to oral input. You may have your child watch any regular movie he/ she enjoys or is familiar with by simply changing the language features of your DVD to Spanish. We have prepared a movie list especially for you which you will find at the “Parent Connection” page within our website.
- **Spanish web-sites**. Another interactive way to exercise their skills is through Spanish learning sites, once they have mastered some computer skills. These sites are usually available for free on the web. They vary in skill requirement and difficulty so make sure you choose the appropriate ones. We have put together a list of learning web-sites which you will find at the “Parent Connection” page within our website.
- **Listen to music in Spanish**. There are many great options and authors to sing along with or just listen to in the car.
- **Expose your child to native Spanish speaking people**, adults and kids. Become interested and involved in their culture yourself even if you don’t speak the language. We are fortunate to live in a multicultural community where there are thousands of Spanish speaking people to interact with at the park, beach, etc.
- **Reading to your child**. If you are confident with your own language skills, read books to your child in Spanish.
- **Label different objects around the house** and in your child’s room in Spanish once you know your child is able to orally recall the words.
- **Schedule a specific time for Spanish**. Native speaking parents often get frustrated when their

children refuse to answer back to them in Spanish. It is important that you do not impose it to your child or fight about it. Instead, make a plan or strategy with them. We recommend you to pre arrange a specific time or period of the day called “Spanish hour” or “Spanish time”, along with an engaging activity that you know they enjoy. Be patient and persistent in this routine. This way, they know what it is expected from them and have a timeframe. They will also feel they can communicate their needs and feelings with you in English if they need to. You may progressively start using Spanish more regularly on a daily basis once children are comfortable enough. Always explain to them why it is important for you and for them to learn the language.

- **Travel!** Visit any of the different Spanish speaking countries with your children. It is a great motivation for both them and you!

HOW TO TEST IF YOUR CHILD IS LEARNING

The first test you need to do with your child is how much he or she is comprehending Spanish, not necessarily speaking Spanish. Speech emergence will come later.

For example:

- While watching movies, listening to music, playing with native Spanish speaking children, try to learn how much your child is understanding.
- If you are watching a movie in Spanish with your child ask what is going on in the story, what is happening to the main character, what the characters’ intentions are. After viewing, you can have your child retell the story in his/her own words.
- If you are listening to music, ask if your child has heard any of the words before or what the songs are about. Queue parts of the songs and let your child keep singing. Sing the song incorrectly and wait for your child to correct you.
- After playing with native Spanish speaking kids or after any life situation where your child interacted in Spanish, ask your child if he or she understood something of what the others were saying. Ask if he or she could communicate. Students are actively engaged in trying to make themselves understood if they really need it, even when their knowledge of the target language is incomplete.
- Collect various snippets of different languages on a tape including both English and Spanish. See if the child can identify the Spanish parts.
- If you speak Spanish give your child simple instructions relevant to what he or she is doing at that time (“abre la boca”). See if your child can complete the request. Keep the instructions meaningful and within context.

In order to test their speaking skills:

- Say an incorrect word and see if they come up with the right one.
- Intentionally pronounce and say words, or even sentences, inaccurately and see if your child corrects you.
- If you know Spanish, ask your child basic questions in Spanish. If you ask a question in English or “Spanglish” they won’t answer in Spanish.
- After watching a movie in Spanish many times, play some of your child’s favorite parts without the sound. Ask your child if he/she can “guess” or remember what is said (one or two words

would be enough at first).

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When testing your child:

- Allow your child to respond by non-verbal physical action in Spanish at the earliest stages.
- Do not ever mix Spanish with English. That is not the natural way of speaking.
- Tolerate errors. Mistakes are natural outcomes of the development of communication skills.
- Make your child feel he/she is learning to do something useful with the language your child studies.
- Consider that the knowledge of forms and meanings is just one part of communicative competence. Another aspect of communicative competence is knowing what language is used for. Always remember, language is for communication.

APPROACHES UPON WHICH OUR PROGRAM IS BASED

Total immersion communicative approach:

- The method is usually introduced in English during the first two or three lessons. After the introduction, rarely would English be used. Meaning is made clear through body movements, facial expressions, visuals, hands-on materials and many other resources.

We incorporate a wide variety of teaching resources, materials and techniques in our programs in order to keep all the language presented simple, clear and easy to understand.

- Language is vehicle for classroom communication, not just the object of study. We use Spanish to accomplish some function such as giving instructions, asking questions, interacting, persuading, expressing feelings and opinions and playing. The teacher's task is to establish situations likely to promote communication

We promote real exchanges of information among the students, and create truly communicative situations in the classroom. Students use the language through activities such as games, role-plays, and problem solving tasks.

Comprehension Approach (also known as Natural Approach):

- Language acquisition naturally begins with the development of the listening skill. This comes from observing how children acquire their mother tongue. A baby spends many months listening to the people around him/her long before he/she ever says a word. The child chooses to speak when he/she is ready. The same notion is applied to foreign language learning. Students listen to the teacher using the target language communicatively from the beginning of their learning process.

We pay special emphasis and attention on keeping the appropriate and necessary balance of all the skills, always providing enough listening time and oral work for students to master their listening comprehension abilities.

Whole Language Learning:

- Language is a total process of listening, speaking, reading and writing. According to Enright and McCloskey, all the language processes work together to help in the acquisition of each. Students need to use listening, speaking, reading and writing as part of a whole rather than as separate skills from the very beginning of the language acquisition process. The Whole Language approach

is reflected in the classroom, where there are hundreds of written words meaningful for the students in every corner and wall.

We start exposing our students to written words, as well as oral language, from the very early stages including beginner, preschooler and toddler levels. Our level and age appropriate series of books specially chosen according to our program's syllabus and approach allow us to systematically and progressively build these skills in a planned, organized sequence.

- Language is acquired in whole-meaning chunks. It is not broken down into small, unrelated segments. This is usually achieved by integrating the language learning experience into a language theme interwoven in all curriculum areas and activities throughout the day.

This is why all the activities within our lessons and all the lessons within our language units are linked thematically. All our activities, lessons, and units are, therefore, carefully planned around themes which are also organized within an overall syllabus.



References:

- Teaching and Learning Languages (Earl W. Stevick)
- Teaching Practice Handbook (Roger Gower & Steve Walters)
- Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching (Diane Larsen-Freeman)
- Language and Content (Bernard A. Mohan)
- Motivation: The Key To Success In Language Learning (Cecilia Elorza)
- Teaching and Learning Vocabulary (Linda Taylor)
- Teaching English as a Foreign Language (Colin Dawson)
- Whole Language, The Complete Guide (Brian Cutting)
- The Art Of Teaching ESL (Addison-Wesley Publishing)

For further reading: If you are interested in learning more about foreign language acquisition methods, please contact us and we will provide you with an extensive reference list.



OUR MISSION AND VISION

Our mission is to develop, provide, and expand the most complete, effective, and engaging Foreign Language Program granting students the ability to learn to inquire, explore new cultures, discover the world, contribute to the foundation of a positive attitude towards multiculturalism, unity among nations, and tolerance in the 21st century's learning communities, in which the culture of hope, possibility, and promise will flourish.

Our vision is to become the most specialized, renowned, and trusted option in learning and teaching a foreign language, extending directly or indirectly our knowledge, programs, and courses to most schooling choices and career and teacher training centers, setting the highest standards in Spanish instruction.

