

ESPAÑOL RÁPIDO - FAST SPANISH

ESPAÑOL RÁPIDO

FAST SPANISH

Part I

(Familiarization and Short Term Training)

Developed by

Foreign Service Institute
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PREFACE

I have felt for some time that there was a need for something less thorough and demanding than Platiemos, but at the same time superior to most of the “beginner” classes on the market—and at a lower price for what the student gets. Don’t be misled, though. Español Rápido (the name we’ve given to our version of the FSI FAST course) will make it possible for you to deal with situations you are likely to encounter in your first days or weeks in a Spanish speaking country with facility—not to mention the psychological points you score by using even basic Spanish.

This course consists of 38 lessons, called "Cycles," which have been prepared for use with accompanying tape recordings. The course was originally designed to be used as the basic material in an intensive ten-week program involving five or six hours of class per day; however, it is also possible to use the material on a less intensive basis, either alone or in conjunction with more traditional materials.

The 38 Cycles focus on practical situations useful for getting around in the Spanish-speaking world. Language notes explain the grammar of the language as exemplified in situational dialogues. In class the instructor will continually vary his or her part of the dialogues in order to give students practice in coping with a wide range of Spanish.

I do want to emphasize that Español Rápido is not a substitute for a more thorough course such as, of course, Platiemos. But it can be both a valuable resource for those who haven’t the time or desire to learn Spanish at a higher degree of proficiency; or for Platiemos students who want to get a head start with some phraseology and vocabulary that comes later in Platiemos—although much more thoroughly.

I wish you all the best in your journey to learning Spanish, and feel free to e-mail me (don@platiemos-letstalk.com) with questions or concerns. I do answer all my e-mails—although sometimes it may take a while.

Don Casteel

INTRODUCTION

What's in it for you?

What are we going to ask of you?

How can you get the most out of this course?

You're going to a Spanish-speaking country, or want to learn some Spanish for some other reason. Maybe you've already had some experience with foreign languages, or maybe you haven't. In either case, it's unlikely that you've studied a language as intensively as you will in this course.

If you have any questions about this course, they probably fall into one of three categories: "What does this course have to offer me?," "What is it going to require of me?," and "How can I get the most out of it?"

What's in it for you?

This course is more than just a language course. Language, after all, reflects only one aspect of what people do as they live and work together. The purpose of this course is to prepare you for just that—traveling or living and working side by side with people whose language and customs differ from your own. The course will teach you to speak and understand some of the language, but you'll also learn about the people who use it—where they live, what they do, what they expect from one another, and what they will expect from you. If you know some of these things—if you have some idea what people think about you and what they think is appropriate behavior in a variety of situations—then even a small amount of language skill can open your eyes and ears to what is going on around you, and you'll be able to participate more and more in the language as the days, weeks and months go by.

You'll find that your new language skill is made up of a number of parts, but that it is basically a well-ordered piece of equipment. It enables you to make sense of what people say to you and to say things that make sense in return. Although the components are the same for everyone, people differ greatly in what parts they become familiar with first and in how they go about fitting the parts together. The purpose of this Introduction is to help you explore your own resources and style as you acquire new skills in Spanish.

What are we going to ask of you?

A. In general, we expect you to

1. Work

- with your mind, to build your own understanding of what you hear and see;
- with your mouth, to work with the audio and take advantage of any opportunities you have to speak with native speakers; and
- with your imagination, to add color, detail, and life to the word- pictures presented in class so that you can relate them to your upcoming in-country needs as you now envision them.

2. Be patient

- with the program (of course!); and, most of all,
- with yourself. Language learning isn't intellectually difficult, but it does take time and effort. At times this time and effort may seem to not be producing results. Believe us, if you keep at it, they will!

B. More specifically,

1. We won't ask you to memorize dialogues, but we do expect you to become sufficiently familiar with the American's role to be able to function satisfactorily in each situation. The sentences in a dialogue are the basic tools; if you master them, you will be able to rearrange and modify them to fit your needs.

2. We don't expect you to understand everything that is said to you, but we do expect you to be able to ask for clarification of what you don't understand.

3. We don't expect you to speak using perfect grammar, but we do expect you to be able to communicate effectively. How can you get the most out of this course?

Here are two tests.

First, suppose that you have just bought a new bicycle, which came unassembled in a box. Before opening this imaginary box, think of the different ways you could go about unpacking and assembling your new possession. You might unpack all the parts and lay them out on the floor in an arrangement that made sense to you. Or you might prefer to find the directions first and read through all of them carefully before doing anything further. Then again, you might get the greatest satisfaction from reading one direction at a time and executing that instruction before looking at the next one. Individuals vary in terms of which of these ways they see as most effective. Nevertheless, they tend to believe that most other people would approach the situation in the same way.

Second, imagine that someone is reading you a list of 10 or 20 isolated English words: path, wall, moon, crumb, and so on. You are to listen and then to write down, in any order, as many of the words as you can remember. In what form would you remember the words? Some people recall the sound of the words as they are spoken. Others envision the words, even though they do not see them, in written form. Still others relate the words to visual images created as the list is read. Which of these methods of learning is most natural for you? No matter which method comes most easily for you, you should recognize that a large proportion of language learners would choose another method, yet there is no apparent difference in effectiveness.

These are only two examples of the ways in which people differ with respect to how they learn. Such differences in learning styles are interesting enough, but it is even more surprising that most people are unaware of the existence of any learning style other than their own. Authors of course materials and teachers may try to accommodate a variety of learning styles, but the differences will still be there.

This is where you must help—by being aware, as we cannot possibly be, of how you are processing new information. In that way, you can work to use your particular learning technique most successfully. Every language student learns to remember new words. When you say that you have "learned" a word, you mean that you have formed a mental image of that word, and that this image is clear enough that you can produce the word quickly and correctly when you need it. The "image" itself consists of a combination of words, spellings, pictures, feelings, and other data. Individuals differ as to which components of the total image are clearest, most natural, or most reliable for them. Generally, however, the image that you carry away with you after your first exposure to a foreign word is incomplete. For example, you may be able to remember only how long the word was, or what the first letter was; or you may remember all the sounds but have them in the wrong order....

Here, understanding differences in learning style is essential, for a word produced from an incomplete image is distorted and will need to be "corrected"—in this case by carefully listening to and emulating the audio, or acquiring assistance from a native speaker. For the correction to be effective, however, you need to take into account your own learning style. For example, some people work primarily with spellings, including their own mental spellings. When a person who learns this way is "corrected" by a teacher or someone else, he or she may simply repeat the word aloud. However, since this student remembers spellings (visual images) better than sounds (auditory images), oral repetition may well be a poor way to improve memory for the word. Instead, it might be more effective for such a person to look (either with the eyes or in the mind) at the previous incorrect image, translate the correction (either visually or mentally) into written form, and then change the image to reflect the correction. Similarly, a person who works best with the auditory component of the image may profit most from reading a written correction aloud.

The following is an important principle to remember when you study by yourself. Don't just repeat things aloud or copy them in writing. Instead, let each repetition be a little test, which you can verify or correct immediately by looking at the book or listening to the tape. Flashcards are a common way of doing this, but you can also cover sentences in the book, try to say them, and then uncover them to see for yourself what you did correctly and where you still need to work on your image of the sentence. You can do the same thing with a tape recorder by anticipating—that is, by stopping the machine before a sentence, trying to say the sentence, and then listening to what is said on the audio. Here again, you will be drawing on, filling out, and strengthening your personal stock of images. The more actively you participate in your own learning process, the faster and more comfortably you will progress.

In addition to learning to remember new words, language students also learn to use patterns. For example, the student of English learns that "The answer is right" is a statement and "Is the answer right?" is a question; the student can then take the statement "The room is comfortable" and turn it into the question "Is the room comfortable?" by following the analogy of the first pair of sentences. That's what we mean by a "pattern"; it's a relationship among several pairs of items. So, in Spanish, if *americano* refers to an American male and *americana* to an American female, and if a *colombiano* refers to a Colombian male, then the word for a Colombian female ought to be *colombiana*—which, in fact, it is. Parrots and myna birds can learn words and even sentences, but they cannot learn to use patterns in order to make up new words or sentences. This ability to respond to and use both images and patterns is what makes language language.

People go about the learning process differently depending on their learning style. Some derive great benefit from drills in which the pattern comes up over and over again until they develop a "feel" for it. Others find that memorizing sentences containing the pattern is sufficient and have little need to think or talk about the pattern in terms of abstract rules. Still others find that rules are the most efficient way for them to assimilate a new pattern and may be uncomfortable if no rules are given. Again, people whose minds work in one way find it hard to comprehend that others' minds work differently, but you need at least to be aware of your particular learning style. Only then can you monitor your learning and work out an effective pattern of study. But enough of our introduction! Now it's time for you to listen to a little Spanish—and soon you'll be speaking some, too!