**Classroom Procedures**

In a few minutes, class will begin. Hopefully you will be pleasantly surprised to learn that the language of communication in the class will be Spanish. This may cause you some frustration at first, but there is an extremely important reason for doing this. I assure you that I do not want to torture you, nor am I trying to make you feel dumb. It would be easier for me to teach you in English, but, paradoxically, that would be the worst thing that I could do to you, because I want you to learn Spanish. To do that, you have to learn to think in the language, both listening and speaking. It’s as if you were walking along the countryside and came to a river of murky water. You must cross; there is no way around. The only solution is to lower yourself into the water and somehow float across. For a while you may not be totally under control, but eventually you will get to the other side. Your tendency will be to hang onto the willows on the far bank (your English) and not let go, but if you do that you’ll never get across. To cross that river is absolutely necessary if you want to learn to communicate in Spanish. Very faithfully following the classroom procedures listed below will make your task much easier.

1) **Listen carefully to what is said, trying to understand.** At first you will not understand all (any) of what I say. I know that. I do not expect you to. But don’t tune me out; don’t panic. Stand your ground, grit your teeth, and try and catch the gist of what I am saying. Watch for gestures, facial expressions, words that are similar in English, and other clues. While you will have to tolerate a little vagueness at first, a successful learner is a good guesser and willing to take risks! Use your imagination.

**2) Communicate the best you can in Spanish.** At first, it will be just a few words, but for a while you will have to return to the level of a child. Try to accept that. I need 100% effort from you in class to use the Spanish you know. It can be mixed with Espanglish if needed. If you are learning to play the piano as a teenager, you would not start with a concerto, you would start with simple pieces. As soon as possible I will give you the tools to communicate with. We will practice with a “COPING CARD” and you should use the words and phrases on it as often as you can. I will conduct a number of activities which will help you practice using these tools until they become second nature.

**3) Try not to feel pressure or anxiety**. Do not have unrealistic expectations, such as speaking at your English level in a year. Grades will be based on your performance and effort, but I will view this as a process of “perfecting” not “perfection.” I will give you ample time to prepare for tests and quizzes, and will help you get ready for them. I am on your side, remember? I am just as eager as you are for you to learn Spanish. Accept correction and suggestions with good humor. Take the attitude that “I’m going to have to make a million mistakes before I learn Spanish, so I might as well get started and have fun with it.” Don’t be alarmed if others in the class seem to be understanding more or seem to be going faster than you are. It will just seem that way; or it may be that some have had more exposure to the language and naturally will have an advantage. Others may have the ability to learn a foreign language easily and quickly (aptitude). But these same differences exist in music, art, athletic skills, public speaking, etc. Adjust and accept the differences, rather than getting down on yourself. Evaluate your individual progress in terms of your own growth, not by apparent progress of others. If you want to quicken your pace, simply spend more time studying and using the language.

4. **Learn with and from others.** Languages are best learned with someone else. Find a partner from the class and practice before or after class or on the phone. As you learn new ways to say things, try them out on friends who speak Spanish. Listen to what others says and get ideas from them. If you can’t find another person to practice with, practice with yourself. Make up plots and conversations in your head, practice what you would say in different situations.

5) **Ask for clarification if you need it**. Don’t assume that you are the only one who doesn’t understand something. Don’t hesitate to say “No entiendo” (I don’t understand) or “otra vez por favor” (Again please) or ¿Qué quiere decir\_\_\_\_\_? (What does\_\_\_\_mean?) I will be happy to try to explain in some other way. I will not respond to questions in English, but I can often anticipate what you want to say and can help you state your question in Spanish. You should make every effort to use the language as much as possible.

6) **Prepare yourself outside of class.** Faithfully do your homework assigned for each week and you will be in great shape.

7) **Be spontaneous and uninhibited:** Learning Spanish can be fascinating and fun. Laugh at/with me, at/with others and at/with yourself (not rude). Enjoy learning!

8. **Think positively.** Everything I do or say has a positive interpretation—never negative. Please reciprocate by being positive at all times. I want to help you do your best. We are on the same team.

With affection,

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