

An Integrative Approach to Teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language

Honors Project

**In fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Esther G. Maynor Honors College
University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

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12 December 2009

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ABSTRACT

AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING SPANISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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According to several teaching theories, certain aspects of a foreign language may be omitted from instruction. This however, is not beneficial to the learner, especially in a Spanish classroom. Every Spanish course, especially a beginner's course, should include all aspects of the language to maximize learning. The identified components of Spanish include: grammar, vocabulary, oral communication, reading, writing, and culture. All components are included in at least one teaching method but not simultaneously. All components with the exception of culture can teach the language without the utilization of the other components; however, this is not as effective as can be with the integration of all said components. All components do not necessarily need to be implemented in each class meeting, but they do need to exist in each course and intertwined with other components. An example of a lesson is provided that clarifies the approach.

When teaching Spanish as a foreign language to young adults and adult learners, it is most effective to incorporate several components rather than focusing on just one. Each component of Spanish is accepted by one or more teaching methods; and these components include vocabulary, grammar, oral communication, reading, writing, and culture. In order to maximize learning, it is essential to learn all necessary aspects of Spanish as a second language. I will introduce and explain each component, how it functions when used alone, and then I will explore the benefits of integrating all of these components. Later, we will use a lesson on the verbs “ser” and “estar” which is a concept that is difficult to explain and understand, that will illustrate my point.

Vocabulary is perhaps the most obvious component of Spanish. It includes all words and phrases. Like most languages, the vocabulary words consist of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions. Vocabulary terms are like the numbers and letters of mathematics. Without the vocabulary of a language, the language itself does not exist. The Spanish language is made up of Spanish vocabulary words that a learner does not know. In order for the student to learn the language, he/she must learn the corresponding vocabulary. Without knowing vocabulary words, a student cannot speak, write, read or listen and understand the foreign language.

It is possible for one to study only this component and be very knowledgeable about the language, but that would be a waste of time. Simply memorizing words, but not being able to put them together, is not successfully learning the Spanish language. One could memorize a thousand vocabulary words in Spanish, but not be able to do anything with the knowledge. And without any context to further nurture the knowledge, it is easy

to forget the array of vocabulary words. Other components make the vocabulary words meaningful. If vocabulary were the numbers and letters of mathematics, then grammar would be what combines them.

Grammar is the second component I will explain. Grammar is what makes vocabulary a valuable element of Spanish. Like vocabulary, it is part of the foundation of the Spanish language. Grammar consists of and is not limited to: the gender of nouns, verb conjugations, and the construction of sentences. This is one of the most popular components used for teaching Spanish to non-native speakers. Traditional teaching methods emphasize grammar over all other components. Teaching just grammar does not benefit the student as much as a holistic program that integrates grammar with other components of Spanish because "...grammar instruction has a limited role" (Krashen 57). It is important for language learners to be able to "...use grammar as a supplement to acquisition in situations where grammar use is appropriate" (Krashen 57). Many high school students take two years of a second language in order to gain acceptance into a 4-year university or simply to meet graduation requirements. Every year, thousands of high school students pass Spanish courses but they do not know the language even at an intermediate level. Of course, there are many factors that deal with the lack of learning (e.g. unmotivated students, poor teaching standards, etc.) but a preventable mistake is pushing a grammar-only program.

Grammar-only programs are usually the preferred choice in Latin courses. Since there is not a culture that speaks it regularly, there is not a push for combining the oral communication element. One could argue that there were once millions of Latin speakers

and the history of the language is evident in many modern languages, but there is not a current culture related to Latin. Students cannot study abroad and surround themselves with the language, like they can with Spanish. There are vocabulary words and grammar rules that can be learned. But everything else about the language is ignored, probably because one cannot visit a country or an environment where it will really be relevant. So a student usually leaves a Latin class with a few grammar rules and vocabulary rules, and likely forgets this information over time. This occurs because they did not practice all elements when learning the language and because, more than likely, they will discontinue the use of Latin.

Without practice and a continuation of learning a language, like with Latin, it is easy to forget previously learned material, especially if the majority of that material is grammar. One can learn everything there is to know about Hispanic cultures, an extensive vocabulary, and several communicative phrases, but not know a lot about Spanish grammar. People use their native tongue daily and sometimes do so without even knowing the grammar rules they are using. Students base their second language on their native tongue. Students who grew up speaking Spanish will know (unconsciously) an entire system of associations between words and objects and functions of grammar. Just because some students do not consciously realize the rules of grammar, does not mean that it is ambiguous in learning Spanish. A classroom is most effective if the grammar rules are taught in combination with other elements.

In Spanish I can say the following sentence, “Me gusta bailar, cantar y nadar.” If one knew all of the vocabulary words, and knew how they sounded they would be able to

determine the content of the previous sentence (“I like to dance, sing, and swim.”) If the listener never saw the word sentence structure while reading Spanish or never actually learned the punctuation, then he/she would not know that there is not a comma before “and” like there would be in English. If the listener had to write the sentence after hearing it, and if he or she spoke English, then the listener would likely follow the English punctuation rules and include the comma.

As previously stated, the gender of nouns is a part of Spanish grammar. If students do not understand this aspect of Spanish, they will not be able to properly construct sentences, since nouns and adjectives must agree. Students that do not learn the gender of nouns and communicate orally may be saying things that are contrary to what they mean. A Spanish teacher once gave me an example of the word “papa”. If one says “el Papa” then he or she is saying “the Pope”. “La papa” means “the potato”. There is obviously a very big difference in meaning between a potato and the Pope.

Like the gender of nouns, adjective-placement can produce contradictory meanings. Sometimes the meaning of a phrase depends on whether the adjective is before or after the subject. “Viejo amigo” and “amigo viejo” have two separate meanings. The first is talking about a friend from a long time ago, and the second term is talking about a friend that is literally old. Without understanding the gender of nouns or the correct placement of adjectives, learners can produce errors in oral communication and in writing.

A verb conjugation is another area of Spanish that can produce different meanings depending on the tense or mood used. The endings of verbs are extremely important

because they indicate who or what is doing an action, and when the action is performed. In a criminal interrogation, the difference of “no fui yo” (it wasn’t me) and “fueron ellos” (it was they) is quite significant. In Spanish, verbs answer who did what in Spanish and when they did it.

Sometimes a communication-based Spanish program replaces grammar instruction entirely. According to Schumann, when communication is really the only method used, and grammar is not learned, there will be a “...simplification in morphology” (150). Therefore, grammar must be used in conjunction with oral communication and all other components. If grammar rules are never introduced, then correct forms of grammar may never be understood or implemented by the learner. This may not be evident when the learner uses oral communication, but a lack of grammar understanding presents itself in writing. Ellis claims that it is important for grammar to exist in second-language Spanish classes, especially in introductory courses, in which students are likely to produce errors (34). Some teachers do not like to formally teach grammar, rather they prefer correct errors when they are produced orally. Whether the traditional approach or more modern approaches are used for grammar instruction, it is imperative that students know what is grammatically correct and what is grammatically incorrect. Teaching proper grammar reduces the continuation of errors and introduces rules that are not easily learned independently.

Followers of the Natural Approach think that grammar should somewhat be pushed aside and that students will be able to “...string the appropriate lexical items together in some ‘logical’ order, even if they have not yet acquired [or learned] any

syntax or morphology” (Krashen 71). However, if teaching grammar clarifies word usage and sentence structure, then it is best for students to learn the grammar. This is better than hoping that in a certain context students will figure out grammar on their own.

Oral communication is the third element that should be present in a Spanish classroom. This component exists because of grammar and vocabulary. Think of oral communication as math problems that use numbers and symbols. Oral communication is the communication of grammar and vocabulary orally. It consists of listening, speaking, reading out loud, and repeating what has been heard.

In most introductory Spanish courses, listening will precede all other forms of oral communication because the instructor will give instructions, read vocabulary, etc. Listening is meaningless unless the listener is able to comprehend what is said. This is where the previously learned grammar and vocabulary become important. It is important for students to listen to the material they have been taught, so that they recognize the sounds of that material. It is a mistake not to introduce listening exercises in the beginning. It is easier to remember vocabulary words and rules if there is a definite sound associated with letters and words. If a learner is memorizing a list of terms and knows the sounds of Spanish, associations between letters and sounds with words will develop, and later words with objects. Students struggle in oral exercises and when reading out loud when they cannot say the words. Students will not be able to say the words if they have not heard them. Therefore, listening to instructors, native speakers, television programs, radio programs, and music can only help the learner in his or her

quest to learn Spanish well. Furthermore, listening prepares the learner for future conversation.

Repetition is a way for students to imitate what they have heard, learn the sound of the words, and help to remember vocabulary and grammar. Repetition exercises combine listening and speaking, which prepare students for future conversations. In a mathematics course a teacher does not usually introduce just one type of problem and go on to the next. Instead, there are several types of problems of the same type that the students must work out. This helps the student remember the tools via repetition.

Oral communication does not only consist of listening and repeating words, but also articulating ideas aloud. It is using the same tools as mentioned before but in a different way. A learner could hypothetically be able to repeat words with a native pronunciation and be able to hear and even understand Spanish, but not be able to respond or verbalize anything. Some teaching schools of thought claim that speaking does not lead to language acquisition, but rather hearing, reading, and understanding are the only sources for learning (Krashen 56). Most people who learn Latin do not read passages out loud or have conversations, because they have no real need to speak. However, to excel in learning Spanish, the ability to speak is crucial in oral communication. Speaking is a major part of conversation (as well as gestures and listening). That is why students must practice creating sentences and forming ideas out loud. Students who are only exposed to parts of oral lack very important “communication skills” (Krashen 58). According to Krashen, “Students who can communicate with native speakers will also tend to do so after any formal language

training is completed, thus insuring further comprehensible input and more improvement in accuracy in their speech “(58). Through oral practice, students become more comfortable with speaking and will be more apt to converse in their second language. It is better to start speaking Spanish from the beginning, so that students familiarize themselves with the language and the words.

Combined with listening, speaking was once the only component used in second language acquisition. Originally, learning foreign languages occurred through the interaction of people of different cultures. Common people did not know how to read or write but were sometimes forced to communicate with foreign people, particularly in trade. Thus, it is possible to use only this area of oral communication to learn a second language. Many learners tend to learn material best by simply hearing Spanish and practicing conversation. It is necessary to note that this is only one type of learner and style, and by using only oral communication some students would not learn as well. Other students need to see concepts or use them before they can learn the material. Listening, repetition, and speaking should not be the only types of activities in a Spanish classroom.

Reading is very similar to the listening part of oral communication, because a student could read an entire book but not understand anything. If students cannot read content in Spanish and comprehend what they have read, they have not truly learned the material. This applies to writing, as well. For learners that will continue to study Spanish in higher-level classes, it is ideal for them to learn how to read and write correctly from the start (Krashen 88). A study by Ludo T. Verhoeven shows that

“...children learning to read in a second language should be helped to build up their oral skills, and that reading instruction should be matched to those skills” (90). Therefore, reading and writing do not exist alone, but are connected with oral communication and all other language components. Most of the time, in graded classes, students will be tested on their knowledge via written exams. They will have to know Spanish in order to read directions and/or write the answers. It would be inappropriate to test a student and expect him/her to read and write without prior exposure to reading and writing.

Culture is the final component of Spanish that should be taught. Obviously, culture cannot be the only thing taught in a Spanish course, because without learning vocabulary, grammar, etc. students would not know how to speak Spanish. They would just know about the places where Spanish is spoken and the social contexts of the language. The main goal of a Spanish class is to teach Spanish; therefore learning only culture would do the learner injustice. Instead, culture should be taught in such a way that it is connected to grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, and oral communication.

Culture is often left out in Spanish classrooms. Some believe that culture is an entirely separate entity from any language and should be studied elsewhere. Culture, however, is a valuable part of all languages. Language would not exist without human beings. It is created socially and its significance is due to the assignment of meanings to people, places, things, ideas, etc. It is then understood that those who have created a certain language should not be excluded or forgotten in the instruction or learning of that language. When students can identify with native speakers, they become motivated to learn more about the language. This is either because they start to relate to the cultures

and peoples they are studying, thus they can improve their communication with the specific group they are studying (Schumann 151). Schumann states that when a broader range of material is learned by the student, (not just communication): "...the speed and fluency of the second language learner increase, obligatory tense markers appear along with adverbs of time, and vocabulary extends to include synonyms with different connotations" (151). When studying Spanish, it is only reasonable to study the places where Spanish is spoken, the people who speak Spanish and other cultural aspects related to the Spanish language.

Aside from the fact that humans are a part of their languages, there are some words and phrases that are only present in specific subcultural groups and even countries. In Spain there is a word for car, "coche" that differs from the commonly used word in Mexico "carro". In Panama the bus is "el diablo rojo", in Peru is "ómnibus", in Spain is "autobús", and in some places it is the "guagua." In the "comunas" of Colombia there is almost an entirely different language spoken. Many concepts and words are location and people specific, so there is a link between culture and language. It makes sense to study the people, the culture, and at least a part of history in a Spanish class.

The presence of different cognitive styles in second language classrooms is well-known in teaching. It is important to know that the wide range of cognitive styles makes it imperative for more than one teaching method to be used in the classroom. If only one method of teaching exists, then only those students who learn better from that method will be learning or learning as quickly. "Each...method proposes to meet the needs of some students who did not prosper using a previously popular method" (Hokanson 512).

Notice that the previous statement did not say “all” students succeeded by any method. This is because most methods do not integrate all components as well as a variety of learning exercises. Therefore, it is necessary to use several different methods of teaching in a second language Spanish classroom so that all students are able to learn. Since integrating all language components is the means to learning maximization, it would be wise to attempt to use all said components for each lesson. If an instructor teaches an entire Spanish lesson by using only one component and teaching method, only some students will grasp the content of that particular lesson. For example, if a teacher only uses sound for a lesson, without any visual aids, then visual learners will not learn much. “Indeed, while some learners go on learning, others seem to cease to make any visible progress, no matter how many language classes they attend, or how actively they continue to use their second language for communicative purposes” (Mitchell 13). In order to maximize the learner’s and teacher’s time, all components must be present in a Spanish classroom, and they should be connected with each other. There needs to be a logical transition from one component to the next (Richards 121). Therefore, a Spanish classroom with integrated language components will be most effective.

The importance of each of the previously described components of language is now evident. Without utilizing all of the components of Spanish: grammar, vocabulary, oral communication, reading, writing, and culture, a full understanding of the language is not possible. We have determined that each and every component can be used by itself in teaching and/or learning Spanish. It has also been clarified that each of those components is important and valuable, but it is best to use all components simultaneously. It is advantageous for the teacher to introduce all of the previously

identified components, because he or she is most likely to successfully teach the material to a broader range of learners with their different cognitive styles. Obviously, the learner is better off if he/she is exposed to all of the components, because the understanding of the language will be greater than if parts of the puzzle were left out.

Suggesting the use of a more integrative approach to teaching Spanish via the use of all components, raises the question of how to incorporate all of the areas of the language. Should they all be present in each lesson? Should all components exist in each and every class meeting? How do you incorporate grammar with culture or vocabulary with grammar? Undoubtedly there is a multitude of ways classrooms can be used to organize a specific class structure. The particular way or fashion is somewhat irrelevant, because what is important is the presence and integration of all components. This is not to say that for the duration of the class, one component taught during one time frame would suffice. All components should be implemented from the first few class meetings and continue throughout the class.

To clarify the suggested use for integration, I will use an example lesson to demonstrate this approach. The topics covered for this lesson will be the verbs “ser” and “estar”. Both mean “to be”, but are used for different purposes. Generally, they can be problematic for non-native speakers of Spanish. In order to maximize learning usage of these verbs, first, the teacher could introduce the verbs “ser” and “estar” by writing them on the board with their corresponding conjugations and meanings.

	Ser-to be	Estar-to be	Meaning(s)
Yo	soy	estoy	I am
Tú	eres	estás	You are
É l, Ella, Usted	es	está	He is, She is, You (formal) are
Nosotros/as	somos	estamos	We are
Vosotros/as	sois	estáis	Ya'll are
Ellos, Ellas, Ustedes	son	están	They are, Ya'll (formal) are

This is a common way that teachers teach grammar to second language classes.

By visually seeing the way the words look and are spelled, learners will be more apt to

identify the word if seen in the future. Students could copy the following table from the board in their notebooks, so they can refer back to it for assistance.

Next, the teacher could then say the conjugations of the two verbs aloud. The oral communication or verbalization of the verbs will emphasize the pronunciation previously taught and help students identify the verb whenever it is spoken. After the students listen to the teacher say each word, they could repeat under the teacher's instruction. This exercise alone used grammar, vocabulary, and oral communication.

Next, the teacher then could verbally tell the students when each verb should be used. A handout with the meanings and examples would be beneficial for the students because there are several uses for both verbs. These two verbs can be complicated, so it is important for the teacher to really explain when to use the appropriate verb and not just read off of the handout.

SER

1. It is used to indicate origin and nationality.

¿De dónde es Ud.?	Where are you from?
Soy de Chile.	I am from Chile.
¿De dónde son ustedes?	Where are ya'll from?
Somos de Perú.	We are from Peru.
Somos peruanos.	We are Peruvian.

2. It is used for telling time and the date (Redondo 31).

¿Qué hora es? ¿Qué hora son?	What time is it?
Es la una.	It's one.
Son las nueve.	It's nine.
Ya son las ocho.	It is already eight.

3. It is used for possession, often with “de”.

¿De quién es ésta pluma?	Whose pen is this?
Es del profesor González.	It's Professor González's.
Son mis cosas.	They are my things.
Son mías.	They are mine.
Es de ella.	It's her's.

4. It is also used for permanent description.

La blusa es azul.	The blouse is blue.
Mi novio es alto.	My boyfriend is tall.
Las ciencias son interesantes.	The sciences are interesting.
¿Cómo es usted?	What are you like? (Describe yourself)
Soy guapo y honesto.	I am handsome and honest.
¿Cómo son ellas?	What are they like? (The girls)

Son trabajadoras.	They are hardworking.
Sara es alta y flaca.	Sara is tall and skinny.

5. Profession or careers indicate the need for “ser”.

Es doctora.	She is a doctor.
Soy estudiante.	I am a student.
El hombre es artista.	The man is an artist.
Ella es poeta.	She is a poet.

ESTAR

1. “Estar” is used for location.

Raul está en un restaurante.	Raul is in a restaurant.
El restaurante está en la ciudad de Panamá.	The restaurant is in Panama City.
¿Dónde están ustedes?	Where are ya'll?
Estamos en una tienda.	We're in a store.

2. It is used before gerunds to signify that something or someone is in the act of doing something (Redondo 45).

Raul está comiendo.	Raul is eating.
¿Qué estás haciendo?	What are you doing?
Estoy brincando.	I am jumping.
Estamos vistiéndonos para ir de compras.	We are getting dressed to go shopping.

3. “Estar” is used for emotions, feelings, and temporary conditions.

Él está feliz.	He is happy.
¿Cómo está usted?	How are you? (formal)
¿Cómo estás?	How are you? (informal)
Estoy bien, gracias.	I am fine, thanks.
Estamos aburridos.	We’re bored.
Mi perro está enfermo.	My dog is sick.

Now that the students know which situations require “ser” and which require “estar”, they should know different words that relate with their uses. The vocabulary should correlate with the grammar usages of the two verbs just studied. Adjectives are commonly used for such activities. Teachers could then hand out a list of adjectives, read them aloud, and have students repeat.

ADJECTIVES COMMONLY USED WITH “SER”

Amable	friendly	Egoísta	-selfish	Joven	young
Entusiasta	enthusiastic	Alto/a	-tall	Viejo/a	old
Estudioso/a	studious	Bajo/a	short	Moreno/a	dark
Trabajador/a	hard- working	Cómico/a	funny	Pálido/a	pale
Ambicioso/a	ambitious	Perezoso/a	lazy	Delicioso/a	delicious
Fuerte	strong	Débil	weak	Sabroso/a	tasty
Tacaño/a	stingy	Fácil	easy	Caliente	hot
Generoso/a	generous	Difícil	difficult	Casado/a	married
Simpático/a	nice, friendly	Antipático/a	unpleasant	Soltero/a	single
Bonito/a	pretty	Feo/a	ugly	Tímido/a	timid
Guapo	handsome	Gordo/a	fat	Hiperactivo/a	hyper
Lindo/a	pretty	Delgado/a	thin	Agradable	agreeable
Interesante	interesting	Flaco/a	skinny	Activo/a	active
Famoso/a	famous	Modesto/a	modest	Caprichoso/a	Quirky

Hermoso/a	gorgeous	Aburrido/a	boring	Cariñoso/a	caring
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Nationalities of Spanish origin. (ALL WITH “SER”)

mexicano/a	Mexican	colombiano/a	Columbian
guatemalteco/a	Guatemalan	ecuatoriano/a	Ecuadorian
salvadoreño/a	Salvadorian	peruano/a	Peruvian
hondureño/a	Honduran	chileno/a	Chilean
nicaragüense	Nicaraguan	argentine/a	Argentinean
costarricense	Costa Rican	boliviano/a	Bolivian
guineanos	From Guinea Equatorial	español/a	Spanish
venezolano/a	Venezuelan	cubano/a	Cuban
puertorriqueño/a	Puerto Rican	uruguayo/a	From Uruguay

panameño/a	Panamanian	paraguayo/a	From Paraguay
dominicano/a	From Dominican Republic		

Some other nationalities

estadounidense or norteamericano	American (USA)
chino/a	Chinese
Ruso/a	Russian
alemán/alemana	German
francés/francesa	French
inglés/inglesa	British

COLORS (USED MOSTLY WITH SER)

Amarillo/a	-yellow	Café	-brown
Verde	-green	Rosado/a	-pink
Negro/a	-black	Blanco/a	-white
Rojo/a	-red	Marrón	-brown
Morado/a	-purple	Violeta	-violet
Azul	-blue	Gris	-grey

* *Es verde* means it is green. *Está verde* means it is not ripe.

ADJECTIVES COMMONLY USED WITH “ESTAR”

Bien	good	Mal	bad	Serio/a	serious
Enfermo/a	sick	Triste	sad	Aburrido/a	bored
Feliz	happy	Enamorado/a	in-love	Cansado/a	tired
Contento/a	content	Loco/a	crazy	nervioso/a	nervous

Now that the students have been exposed to the vocabulary and grammatical functions of “ser” and “estar”, a teacher could use several different activities like the ones I have provided to help students remember what they have just gone over. The first

activity is a worksheet. The teacher should let the students have ample amount of time to complete the activity and then go over the answers with the class.

Answer the following questions.

1. ¿Cuál es la nacionalidad de un chico de China?
2. Si una muchacha es alemana, ¿Cuál es la nacionalidad de su hermano?
3. ¿Cuál es la nacionalidad de un hombre de Guatemala?
4. ¿En cuántos países se habla el español (lengua oficial)?

Make sentences using gerunds and adjectives of nationality based on the information provided.

Ex. Muchacha/Perú/nadar.....La muchacha peruana está nadando.

1. Hombre/Honduras/correr
2. Chica/El Salvador/brincar
3. Niño/Nicaragua/escribir
4. Viejo/Alemania/estudiar
5. Mujer/Francia/enseñar
6. Chicos/Cuba/leer

Image 1



For questions 7-9 refer to Image 1.

7. ¿De qué color es la flor?

8. ¿De qué tipo es la flor?

9. ¿Dónde está la flor?

For questions 10-13 refer to Image 2.

10. ¿Dónde está la muchacha?

Image 2



11. ¿De qué color es su blusa?

12. ¿Cómo es su pelo?

13. ¿Cómo está la muchacha?

For questions 14-17 refer to Image 3.

14. ¿Cómo es la casa?

15. ¿Dónde está la casa?

16. ¿De qué color es el techo?

17. ¿De quién es la casa?

Image 3



The teacher can hold up a picture like the one below, for example, and ask different questions.

ASK: ¿Cómo es el muchacho?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS:

El muchacho es alto.

El muchacho es guapo.

Es cómico.

El muchacho es simpático y amable.

El muchacho es delgado.

El muchacho es estadounidense.

If students do not guess all of these answers, then the teacher can ask them the ones they did not guess. For example, ask ¿El muchacho es delgado? if they did not guess this one.

ASK: ¿Cómo está el muchacho?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS:

El muchacho está feliz.

El muchacho está cansado.

ASK: ¿Qué está haciendo el muchacho?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS:

Está cocinando.

Está sonriendo.

Está asando.

ASK: ¿De qué color es su camiseta?

ANSWER: Es gris.

ASK: ¿De qué color son sus pantalones?

ANSWER: Son grises.

ASK: ¿De qué color son sus zapatos?

ANSWER: Son azules.



The previous activity helps students hear questions with “ser” and “estar” and it allows them to use them with adjectives to create sentences. This obviously should not be the only practice with the verbs, so the teacher can provide several other pictures to do

the same activity with different types of people or the same people doing different things. The picture below is of the same man as before, but in this picture he is doing something different, wearing different clothes, showing a different facial expression, and it is clear that he is a firefighter “Es bombero.”

ASK: ¿Cómo es el muchacho?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS:

El muchacho es alto.

El muchacho es guapo.

Es cómico.

El muchacho es simpático y amable.

El muchacho es delgado.

El muchacho es estadounidense.

ASK: ¿De dónde es el muchacho?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS:

El muchacho es de Pembroke.

ASK: ¿Cómo está el muchacho?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS:

El muchacho está enojado.

El muchacho está cansado.

El muchacho está serio.

ASK: ¿Qué está haciendo el muchacho?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS:

Está trabajando.

Está llevando algo.

Está escuchando música.

ASK: ¿De qué color es su camiseta?

ANSWER: Es blanca.

ASK: ¿De qué color son sus pantalones?

ANSWER: Son grises.

ASK: ¿De qué color son sus zapatos?

ANSWER: Son amarillos.

ASK: ¿Cuál es su profesión?

ANSWER: Es bombero.



For this activity, the teacher can hold up the following pictures and ask the students

¿Qué hora es?

A.



B.



C.



A similar activity could be done with the picture below. The teacher can ask the students several different questions.

¿De qué color es el camión?

¿Dónde está el camión?

¿Cómo es el camión?

¿De qué marca es el camión?

¿Es grande o chico?

¿Es nuevo o viejo?



The teacher could also ask individuals to describe themselves on a sheet of paper. Therefore, they will be answering the question ¿Cómo eres? They could right at the top of the paper “Yo soy...” and then write adjectives that describe them, paying careful attention to the endings of the adjectives. If the teacher would like, he/she could pass out construction paper and crayons for the students to draw themselves on the paper. Before class, the teacher could do this activity to show the students an example or simply show the example below. Afterwards the students could share their personal descriptions with the rest of the class to practice oral communication.

Yo soy...

bonita

baja

estadounidense



simpática

amable

estudiosa

ambiciosa

A reading comprehension activity is an excellent way for students to see how the verbs and adjectives go together. This forces them to really understand what they read because they have to answer questions related to the text. An activity is provided below.

ASHLEY PABST



Ashley nació en Alemania pero es estadounidense. Su padre es militar. Su madre es artista. Vinieron a los Estados Unidos cuando tenía dos años. Ella tiene veintiún años ahora y vive en Carolina del Norte con su esposo, Bryston. El tiene veintitrés años. Ashley es estudiante en la Universidad de Carolina del Norte en Pembroke. Es estudiosa y ambiciosa. Quiere ser maestra de español. Es amable y simpática. Es baja y delgada.

Preguntas:

¿Cómo es Ashley?

¿De dónde es Ashley?

¿Dónde vive?

¿Cuál es su nacionalidad?

¿De qué color es su pelo?

¿De qué color es su vestido?

¿Cuál es la profesión de su padre? ¿Y la profesión de Ashley?

¿Y la de su madre?

¿Cuál es el nombre de su esposo?

¿Ashley es profesora?

¿Qué quiere ser Ashley?

¿Ashley es antipática?

Question and answer activity

Ask a student ¿Cómo estás?

Ask a different student ¿Cómo están tus padres?

Ask a different student ¿Cómo están tú y tu mejor amigo/a?

Ask a different student ¿Cómo está tu hermano?

Ask a student to ask you ¿Cómo está usted?

This activity helps the learner understand that the answer to these questions may require a different form of the verb that is in the question. It helps the student understand the usages of “estar” and how to answer the questions that often involve the verb.

To use reading and writing, teachers could give a handout (see below) that is in a question and answer format using the adjectives and verbs previously taught. Since the student has been introduced to the verbs and when to use them, this handout will allow them to answer questions on paper so they see how the questions and answers look.

¿Cómo eres?

¿Cómo es tu mejor amigo/a?

¿Cómo estás?

¿Cómo son tus padres?

¿Dónde estás?

¿Dónde está tu madre?

¿Dónde está tu mochila?

Many students just read a list of vocabulary words out of a book very quickly and do not really learn the words. But forcing them to use them and spell them will result in a greater understanding of those words. Another way teachers can integrate all components is through a song. For example, the teacher could introduce a singer from a particular country. He/she could give information about the singer and his/her culture, and later ask questions about the lyrics. After introducing the singer, it would be a good idea to pass out lyrics to the song so that students can read along while they hear the song. It would be good for the students to hear the song several times.

Because of copyright issues, I have created my own song below. Teachers can record themselves singing the song or have someone else do it. After playing the song, the teacher can indicate the uses of “ser” and “estar” in the song and provide an activity like the one provided below. Using youtube.com can be an excellent tool for applying this activity.

Mi historia

Soy una muchacha casada

Casada soy yo

Soy una mujer joven

Jovencita soy yo

Soy amable, agradable

¿Cómo eres tú?

Me casé con un galán

Un hombre alto y guapo

Simpático y honesto

Es perfecto en serio

La gente me llama loca

Loca no soy yo

Sería loca de no casarme

Con un príncipe real

Si encuentras uno así

No lo dejes

Porque soy una chica feliz

De estar con mi amor

Un amor feliz

Y estamos felices.

Answer the questions and fill in the blank where appropriate.

1. ¿Cómo es la mujer?
2. ¿Cómo eres?
3. La gente dice que _____ loca?
4. (El esposo)_____ simpático y honesto.
5. (Yo)____ amable y agradable.
6. Y (nosotros) _____ felices. Indicar la razón de usar “ser” o “estar” en su respuesta.
7. Identifica el adjetivo, el género, y si el sustantivo es plural o singular.

(Ella es) Una muchacha casada.

Jovencita soy yo.

(Él) Es perfecto.

The previous example lesson incorporates all language components of Spanish and a variety of different teaching strategies. The vocabulary and grammar functions were first explained and then used in the activities. The lesson appealed to visual learners because of the pictures of people. Learners that learn better through song, listening, reading, or writing, all could potentially benefit from the provided lesson. What is most relevant, however, is that all components of the Spanish language were covered.

For homework, students can present a PowerPoint presentation to the class about themselves. The slides should include the correct form(s) of the verbs “ser” and “estar” as related to the following sections that should be included in the presentation.

1. Nationality and place of origin (e.g. Soy estadounidense. Soy de los Estados Unidos.)
2. Nationality and place of origin of student’s parents (e.g. Mis padres son norteamericanos. Son de Boston).
3. How the student is doing/feeling (at the time of the presentation).
4. What the student is doing (at the time of the presentation).
5. What the student is like (physical and personality description).
6. Where the student is (at the time of the presentation).
7. What time it is (at the time of the presentation).

The presentation should include sound and images that relate to the content.

Students presenting will be able to practice speaking and the class will be exposed to the material of the presentation both orally and visually.

Another exercise could be one that involves the teacher handing out a small article and having the students underline the uses of “ser” and “estar” and have them write out the reason why each verb was used for homework.

It is easier and more effective for the student to learn Spanish when exposed to all aspects of the language and when the material learned in class is applied to practical situations. An integrative approach is ideal and easy. All it requires is some planning.

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