

# Ricardo's Spanish Coaching Dispatch

## “Your Latino Friends”

The following is a quote from an email a new student wrote to his tutor, “I am trying to understand the verb patterns in the GPS system. I think the problem I have asking my Latino friends to help me is communication. They don't understand what I am asking or how this course is organized.”

Ok, he's correct. They don't understand what he is asking or how the course is organized. So, the reality is, that even if their intentions are good, those of his Latino friends, ok, or yours, your Latino friends are of very little help to you until you get to a certain point with your Spanish.

Now, they may be amazing people. Most of us Latinos, you know, we're amazing people. We're fun to be around, we're encouraging, we're good natured, you know, *casi perfecto*, but...

Wanting to involve your Latino friends in your Spanish learning while you are learning is like a Medical Student asking patients for advice on passing their medical exams. It's not that a physician doesn't need to understand the way patients act or think. They do! It's that when you are studying to become a physician, that's not who you ask for advice regarding your medical studies.

Or, it's like a law student asking people to give them advice on how to pass the bar exam. Attorneys do need to understand the mindset and the actions obviously of people who get in trouble, but they certainly can't help you pass the bar exam.

So you see, there are only two potential areas of involvement for Latinos in your Spanish learning process. They are:

1. You ask them for advice about the Spanish language, which is what this particular student was doing, asking his Latino friends for advice about the patterns in The SpansihGPS™ and they didn't know how to answer.
2. You ask them to practice Spanish with you.

First, let's take a scenario where you ask your Latino friends for advice about learning Spanish. Are they Spanish teachers? And by the way, even many Spanish teachers are not really experts in the process of explaining it but that another discourse. Are they experts in the pedagogical principles of adult Spanish language acquisition? Which is a fancy way of saying “do they truly understand the principles of pedagogy?” or which is another way of saying “do they understand the learning and teaching processes necessary for adults?” What you're doing if you're asking them for advice is you're asking them to do something for which they are not prepared and that is to teach you the structural principles and processes of learning the Spanish language.

Second, you ask them to practice with you. This is ok, if and only if,

- a. you are at least a late intermediate speaker, and,
- b. they are able to speak with you at a pace that you can handle and also use structure and vocabulary you have learned to that point in time.

Unless that is the case, you are better off not practicing with them. You may ask why? The reason is because every time you talk with them, you'll be taken on a detour and you'll be frustrated. You're not ready for that at that point. You don't have the infrastructure to handle it properly. Rather than staying focused on your learning process, you'll be trying to talk about things which you simply are not prepared to do.

As you may know, especially if you listened to my last coaching dispatch on immersion programs, I do think there is a place for an immersion experience and it is AFTER you at least finish our Advanced Level course. Until then, stay focused, build the language, ask your Latino friends to be patient, and get your "Spanish degree"!

By the way, one of the most powerful things you can do for yourself is NOT tell your Latino friends you are learning Spanish. So, check this out. Let's say you have a good Latino friend who would be BLOWN AWAY by hearing you speak Spanish well. Why not surprise, no, why not shock them? Learn well, and then sometime down the road, when you do speak really well, invite them to do something with you in a Latino environment. *Un ambiente latino*. Imagine their surprise and their admiration to see you conversing well in Spanish. This does two things; it keeps them off your back as you're going through the learning process; it keeps them out of it, and provides you with some very powerful personal motivation.

This is exactly what one of our students who lived in New York City did. He had a Puerto Rican girlfriend, not just a friend, his girlfriend! Anyway, he didn't tell her he was learning Spanish and he took this advice. He held the secret and he said it fueled his motivation so incredibly just thinking about the day when he would shock her with his new skill. Later, after he did this, he told me that she was absolutely BLOWN AWAY on their "Spanish" date.

Powerful. Super Powerful. Or as we say *en español*, *super poderoso*.

**¡Adelante!**