

Ricardo's Coaching Dispatch

“Left Hand, Left Brain Spanish Learners”

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Logical, *lógico*. Analytical, *analítico*, Rational. Objective. Organized, *organizado*. You see we pride ourselves on having these qualities. Listen again and just feel the desire to be these things, how they swell up inside of you.

Logical.

Analytical.

Rational.

Objective.

Organized.

These are all good things right? No left!

These are all traits of the very rational left side of our brains. It is generally agreed that our brain has two different sides. The left side of our brains (and by the way, is that looking at it from the front or from the rear?) ok, that was a left-brained joke just to make you think, anyway, the left side of our brains control logical, analytical, rational and objective thinking. The right side of our brains is highly creative, manipulative (in a good way) and visual. The right side of our brains is more intuitive and spontaneous.

Most successful professionals tend to be stronger in their left-brain (analytical and logical) skills than in their right-brain (creative and intuitive) skills. Of course, the ideal human being would be perfectly balanced and we should all strive for that balance. Anyway, this presents a challenge in language learning as the best learners are typically more on the creative side of things. These learners don't get bogged down in the details. They don't watch the clock. They are good with flow and movement and don't need to get everything absolutely correct. They are happy with overall progress and don't ever expect something to be perfect. Left-brain analytics, however, make their living by getting things right. Mmm, that sounds a bit like an oxymoron doesn't it? Left-brain analytics make their living by getting things right.

The point is that to enjoy high levels of success in language learning, you must develop your right-brain skills. You have to cut it loose. You have to be creative. Sometimes you do have to forget about the clock and just enjoy it. You have to let out your inner artist. You have to ham it up and enjoy the process. Now just to be analytical for a moment, I do understand that this part is difficult for many of our students and that's why I am bringing this to your attention. ¿Comprende? Capish?

Yesterday, I was on the phone with two advanced Spanish students on a conference call. We were discussing the possibility of doing some training conferences together -- in Spanish -- to teach Spanish-speaking people higher level business skills. Both of these people are highly successful and highly qualified to do this training. Although both of them speak Spanish very well they both have some fears about doing this. Why? They are afraid of making mistakes in public. They are afraid of not getting things just right. That's left-brain.

A person who is right-brain dominant wouldn't think that way. They would just think, wow, that would be really cool, I'll get out there and wing it and do the best I can and if they accept me then cool and if not, that's cool too. I'll just do the best I can and that will be good enough. Cool right? In other words, if they were right-brain creatives they would be a lot more relaxed about it.

I want you to do something. Take a blank piece of paper and a pen.

Now, put the pen in the hand you do not normally use for writing. For most of us who are right-handed, that means put it in your left hand. If you are left-handed, put it in your right hand.

Now, write your name.

Does it look the same as when you write it with your dominant hand? Of course not. Does it feel comfortable to write with your non-dominant hand? Absolutely not.

Now, write this sentence.

I am writing with my left hand. (or you write with your right hand if you are left handed)

Write this sentence, "I am writing with my left hand." that's the sentence.

How does that look and how did that feel? Not too good I would imagine.

Now, write this sentence with your off-hand.

Yo estoy escribiendo con mi mano izquierda. (o derecha if you are left handed)

Now, depending on your present level of Spanish that may even feel more weird and more awkward than just writing in English.

Here's my point, as you are just beginning to learn Spanish, you will feel like you are writing with your off hand. If you're right-handed, you will feel like a left-handed Spanish learner. It won't feel comfortable and it won't look pretty.

Now, and I hope that all of you left brain dominant people get this. Because this makes good logical sense. You shouldn't expect it to feel comfortable or look pretty. That's the point. You need to be ok with that or you'll get easily frustrated, you'll want to quit and want to give up. That is normal.

The truth is, however, that if you stay with your off-hand writing for any length of time you would get very good at it. You would get comfortable with it.

A woman named Joni Erickson Tada, whose name you may recognize, had a diving accident when she was a teenager and was paralyzed from the neck down. She is one of the most well-known Christian artists in the world. She draws and paints beautiful works -- with her mouth!

Your greatest strength, and possibly your greatest weakness, may just be the left side analytical part of your brain. Think about it. No, don't think about it. You get the point right?

¡Adelante!