

# Ricardo's Coaching Dispatch

## "Eliminating Cultural Constraints that Affect Spanish Learning"

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In our last coaching dispatch we talked about understanding and eliminating constraints. We then discussed a few specific constraints that people have as it relates to learning Spanish. I was very encouraged because many of you wrote to me about how that helped you and how much you liked the coaching dispatch. In today's coaching dispatch I want to continue our discussion on constraints -- in a different way. A constraint is something that limits you. It's where the bottleneck is ok.

Today's let's talk about cultural constraints that can affect Spanish learning. This is going to be very interesting.

There are two main cultural things that many Spanish learners deal with either consciously or subconsciously. Remember, constraints are many times logical or mental and today's constraints fall in that category. These are not physical in nature. These are mental or emotional in nature. These are tougher to deal with. These require more honesty and personal integrity to overcome.

If you have these two constraints, or one of them, it will hold you back in your Spanish. You may also have other cultural constraints but this will get us started.

Ready? Listo?

Muy bien, ok, now hold on here because this is going to challenge you to think.

**The first cultural constraint a lot of people have is the belief that Spanish speakers who are in the United States should learn English.**

You know, "*they're in our country, they should learn English.*"

About a month ago I was with a person who had been in our Spanish program and he stopped learning Spanish. He wasn't disappointed in our program, in fact, he was happy with our Spanish program. His wife has learned quite well in the program and we happened to be in their home for the evening. I asked him why he stopped the program. His answer was very provocative to me.

He said that he ran into a person in his area where he lives who is Hispanic who had lived there for some time who still didn't speak English decently well. He said it made him so upset to think about him putting in so much work to learn to communicate with people like her in Spanish that he decided to stop learning Spanish. He reasoned that it was really more their responsibility than his.

Now, I want you to be 100 percent honest here. Have you ever had that type of thought? If you have, you can relate to this guy, right?. If you haven't, be empathetic here.

Should Latinos learn English? Of course! Even Latinos in Latin America should learn English. It is the primary language of business in the world. People who live in the United States who don't learn English are at a serious vocational and social disadvantage.

I said to my friend, "So, basically you're hurting yourself because someone else is hurting themselves?" Really, think about it, just because someone else jumps off a bridge doesn't mean we should do it with them, right. It doesn't matter that their bridge is "English" and your bridge is "Spanish." That's not the point.

You should primarily be learning Spanish because it can significantly improve your own quality of life. Most people aren't learning Spanish to be a martyr. Only when you have a high-quality of life can you really help people anyway. The truth is that learning Spanish is good for you! You'll be more vocationally viable, you'll be better equipped to reach more people for good, you'll be able to make more money if you play your cards right, you'll increase your own mental powers, and if necessary, you could even explain to one of these people who don't learn English how and why they should do so.

So, confront this constraint if you have it. Yes, Hispanics should learn English. So what! You're not one of them. You are you and you shouldn't make decisions based on what other people do or don't do for themselves. Don't make that your deal. Eliminate this constraint.

**Now, let's look at the second cultural constraint that holds a lot of people back.**

This one might be a little sensitive but hear me out on this and think about it. My goal is to help you here.

**Fear. *Miedo*. Fear. *Mieeedo*.**

Many times it's human nature to fear the unknown. To you, the Latino culture may be a bit of an unknown. It's one thing to talk with Latinos you already know, or those who come into your office or place of business, but what about going into their environment on their terms. Does this bring a sense of pause and perhaps fear to you? It would be normal if it did.

You may have a fear of "will they accept me?" A fear of "do I really want to fit in with them and their culture, am I really up to that?" or even, and very subtly "Will I be as successful in that environment as I am in my own? Could I handle that psychologically?" Now granted, these fears may be subconscious and that's why the logical or mental constraints are the toughest to detect.

The fear of change and of things that are different than we are used to is real. We are creatures of habit and change is difficult for most human beings. If it is not for you, then you are in a very select group of people.

I fully recognize that in your case this fear may be subtle. For some people, it is acute. They fear Latinos "taking over" our country, they fear going into predominantly Latino areas thinking they'll be robbed or something worse. I hope you're not in that group but if you are you have to face it honestly. That would definitely hold you back! That doesn't mean, however, that it doesn't exist to some degree and to the degree the fear exists it can hold you back.

I am not going to suggest in any way that you shock your fear into submission by doing something crazy. For example, taking a drive at 1:00 a.m. in the roughest Latino area of your city and stopping at the local Latino discoteca to start flirting with someone else's girlfriend is bueno, no hay palabras para describir ese tipo de locura. That means, there are no words to describe that type of craziness. You're just looking for problems if you do something dumb like that. That's not how we overcome fear. That's how we end up in the hospital or worse. That's like bungy jumping with a rubber band you bought at Wal-Mart!

What I am going to suggest here are three things that will help you to overcome whatever fear of engaging with Latinos you might have:

**1. Prepare yourself before engagement.** You've heard me say this in the SpanishPower™ course I'm sure. Don't go out trying to use your Spanish with native speakers until you're prepared to succeed. That first time should be a successful time. If you are in the tutoring program, your tutor can guide you with this. Generally speaking, this should be around towards the end of the Intermediate Level or early Advanced Level.

**2. Engage in safe environments first.** There are many relatively comfortable ways to engage with Latinos in this country. Going to an Hispanic Chamber of Commerce meeting, a meeting of Latino business professionals, a spiritual study at your local place of worship. Those are all safe and comfortable meeting places. They are easy to access and also include people who have similar interests as you. In other words, don't stretch yourself too far until you develop some initial flexibility. It's like someone telling you not to try to run ten miles when you haven't run one mile in 30 years. Get in shape first and this is the best way to get in shape that I know.

**3. Engage in real-life situations.** Now you're ready.

Before you go and get heavily involved in the Latino culture, both from a social and business standpoint, get used to it in the more controlled and safe environments as I just suggested. You'll probably even strike up a friendship or two with people who will befriend you and show you the ropes. As in all things, be smart. Don't put yourself in situations that cause you great concern or fear. To be honest, there are places where I won't go. Not because I don't think I could handle it but because I don't think it is a safe place to be. That's healthy fear. Be balanced and you'll achieve your goal.

So, there's nothing to fear but fear itself. Fear is the great constraint in life. It will keep you from achieving your goals, it will keep you from staying positive and it will keep you on edge about learning Spanish in the first place. So, I'm asking you to NOT deny your fears, be honest about them, confront them and take realistic and positive steps to overcome the ever present constraint of fear.

Muy bien. Here's an assignment for you. Search your spirit to see if you have these or other cultural constraints that may be holding you back. The exercise will be worth it and if we can help you with this, then please let us know as well .

Also, in the interest of feedback and dialogue, I want to invite you to post any thoughts or comments you have about this particular coaching dispatch below the audio on this page. Who knows you might be an instrument for good in the life of another student.

In next week's coaching dispatch, we'll leave constraints behind and I'm going to teach you in detail one of my favorite Spanish learning techniques so make sure to come back then.

*Adelante.*