



Language Link Online January 2012

Language Link

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Tips and information about learning Spanish and the people who speak it. By popular request returning now to every other month publication.

What's in this edition

Online Lesson, Cocina Cooking, Culture Clips, Language Link's Latest, OJO (real deals), Rhythm & Book Blurbs, Been There, Loved That (reports from participants), Likeable Links

Deadline soon! – Join our small group On The Road *viaje* to Guatemala, including Tikal, Lake Atitlán and more! March 18 – 25, \$1300, deadline for registration Feb 15. For full itinerary kay@langlink.com or see On The Road section at www.langlink.com

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, set away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your spinnaker. Explore. Dream. Discover.” – Mark Twain

Cocina

Cooking

This will be a vocabulary lesson, as well as a recipe. Plátano is the word most often used for banana, but there's a huge difference between the yellow ones normally eaten in the U.S. and the ones translated into English as plantains. Many of the recipes using bananas in Latin America include the ones which you cook, plantains. In Spanish (at least in Mexico) these are called plátano macho. They are bigger than the common banana and very firm. The trick here is to let them turn very speckled and almost black on the outside. They appear to be rotten, but

Online Lesson

Thanks to all of you who have written to tell me how you have used these little lessons. And thanks to the recent reader who wrote with a completely legitimate correction...you keep me on my toes, and I appreciate it. We're all in this Spanish learning soup together. Don't Get Tense About Tenses!

Quite often I hear students express that their main problem in Spanish is choosing the right tense. Verbs are definitely more complicated than in English, but there are some nuances which make things easier. I have been struck while living in Mexico how often the simple present tense is used, even for things that haven't happened yet. For instance, in English, quite often we say (using a future tense), I'm going to call you later or I'll call you tomorrow. Because this future is not so far off, in Spanish it would be commonly expressed as *Te llamo más tarde (o mañana)*. Simple present tense!

Other examples which in English are future, but in Spanish in the present, with either tú or usted forms:

Will you let me know? *¿Me avisa(s)?*

Will you wait for me? *¿Me espera(s)?*

Will you sign for me? *¿Me regala su firma, por favor?*

(This is one of my favorite, as you're being asked literally to give your signature as a gift, or a regalo. Very polite!)

Another note here, if they ask for your *firma electrónica*, it's your card PIN number required.

Will you call me tomorrow? *¿Me llama(s) mañana?*

I am going to come by your house Monday. *Paso por tu*

this just means they're ripe and ready to cook.

Plátanos Fritos

Ingredients: 4 ripe plantains, peeled, cut in half crosswise, then lengthwise, or cut in rounds, vegetable oil for frying. Heat about 1/2-inch of oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the plantains, a few pieces at a time, and sauté until lightly browned. Turn and sauté the second side. Some sources recommend cooking them over a lower heat until tender, then turning up the heat to brown them nicely. Remove to a paper towel-lined plate and repeat with the rest of the plantains. Sprinkle with a little salt and serve hot. If you prefer a little sweetness on them, top with a bit of brown sugar while they're still in the pan. These are served in many ways – for breakfast (they're so good with pancakes), over rice to accompany fish or chicken. I recently had them rolled up, stuffed with shrimp, and topped with mole sauce...irico!

OJO

Last call to enter our contest for a *gratis* two week study *viaje* to PLFM of Antigua, Guatemala. Air is on you, but the offer includes two weeks of one on one classes and a homestay with solo housing and daily meals. We've been running this for a while, but have decided to delay the close to allow you to win and perhaps combine it with our On The Road *viaje* to Guatemala on March 18. Just click our contest box to enter. All we ask is a brief comment from you. You'll then be included in the general drawing for a winner.

Language Link's Latest

January 2012 has been quite busy for Language Link. We've had university groups in Cuernavaca, Antigua and Costa Rica. Many of these college students combine volunteer work with a customized Spanish course such as Business, Teaching or Medicine. We'll finish out the month with a course for diabetes educators in Oaxaca, enabling them to better serve their Spanish speaking patients.

casa el lunes.

Sometimes in English we use will, not as the future, but to make a request. Will you split a salad with me? In Spanish, just use the present tense of *querer* (ie).

¿Quiere(s) compartir una ensalada? Will you do me a big favor? *¿Quiere(s) hacerme un favorzote?*

But then there's the future tense in Spanish used for something we commonly say in English in the present tense. How many times do you start a sentence with "I wonder". There's no real equivalent of this in Spanish (although *me pregunto* is sometimes used as in the meaning I ask myself), but the future tense comes to the rescue. When saying to a driver or a clerk, I wonder if you have change. In Spanish even simpler, *¿Tendrá cambio?* I wonder what time it is. *¿Qué hora será?* I wonder if he's coming or not. *¿Vendrá o no?*

Use these little gifts of Spanish tenses to make your life less tense!

Culture Clips

The Enchanted Carpets of Antigua Forget about Ali Baba and his enchanting flying carpets. There's nothing that can approach the wonder of the carpets or *alfombras* of Antigua, Guatemala's Holy Week or *Semana Santa*. In 2012 it starts on Sunday, April 1 (Palm Sunday) and continues until Easter Sunday, April 8. It's one of the most culturally interesting festivities worldwide, and it should definitely be on your "bucket list" to attend. PLFM of Antigua offers homestays and a shortened schedule of classes during Holy Week, so it's a very affordable way to experience this.

As I am not a *madrugadora* (early bird), but rather a *buho* (night owl), to my own amazement I find myself along with Meredith being roused out of my bed in Antigua at 3:00 am. What would cause me to sleep such a short night? It's the enchanting early morning of Good Friday or *Viernes Santo* of *Semana Santa*. The experience is brief, intense, and will have disappeared within the time frame of a little more than 24 hours. It gives an entirely new meaning to the Zen phrase of "Be here now". Our hosts are leading us on a tour to watch the preparation of the carpets which will line Antigua's streets, which will host the most important processions of the week. The entire town seems to be awake, as there is a beehive of activity before sunrise. The streets are all blocked off so that no vehicles can interfere but there are hundreds of people on their knees in the streets. So what in the world is happening in this frenzy of energy, creativity and passion? They're making street carpets...out of sawdust!

So here's a carpet primer, *Alfombras* 101. There are two basic kinds of procession carpets, ones made from colored sawdust and molds, and ones made from just about anything else. This would include flowers, pine needles, fruit, vegetables, and other objects. The carpets are made by residents, friends, and families along processional

Proposals for 2013 are already being requested. We never know what kind of request is going to hit our email box, and we love the challenges.

Please keep in mind the possibility of Spanish study for your teen next summer. Although we have many organized groups of that age, we also send individual teens. Language Link has many possibilities for your teen with various locations, ranging from the *playa* of Costa Rica to the excitement of cities in Spain. Sometimes we even combine these teens with their whole family studying Spanish. We love to see that!

Our On The Road one week viajes, including daily Spanish class, have been so well received that we're scheduling four for 2012. We'll include Costa Rica next summer, by popular request. Many of you have asked to know the dates well in advance, so get these on your calendars. We need registrations 6 – 8 weeks in advance. We won't have full itineraries or costs developed for a while on some of the later ones but you know that we always include everything you want to see and keep at a comfortable price for the quality received. You can see past itineraries and upcoming trips in our On The Road section of www.langlink.com.

Dates slightly changed than previously announced. Guatemala: March 18 – 25, Costa Rica: June 24 – July 1, Peru: August 13 – 20, Chiapas: November 4 – 11

Rhythm & Book Blurbs

Book - I, *Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* (Second Edition) by Rigoberta Menchú, Elisabeth Burgos-Debray and Ann Wright (2010) This is not an easy book or subject about which to read. Rigoberta Menchu is an indigenous woman who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993. The book is a very personal account of her experiences and observations of indignities and atrocities committed against the

routes. The processions involve *hermandades* (brotherhoods) who place statues from the churches on giant platforms called *andenes*. These are incredibly heavy, and it takes many people to carry each one.

The carpets are offered up as a sacrifice in anticipation of the procession that will obliterate them by marching through the painstaking and fantastic creations. When one procession has gone by, a clean-up crew follows, removing the remains. The themes for the carpets are usually religious, but the sky is the limit here. There are also political motifs and the occasional Maya themed carpet.

To build a sawdust carpet the first thing you do is get many bags of precolored sawdust. Before laying the base, the spot on the blocked off street is washed with a hose. This cleans the area, and it also holds down the sawdust base on the street. The Maya also believe that water absorbs evil energies, and they then evaporate. A frame of 2 x 4 boards is made, and a layer of raw sawdust is poured. After the frame and base layer are complete it is time to put the design on. Some people work off the top of their heads, while others have a drawing. Templates are used for repetitive design elements. The templates are laid down on the base sawdust and colored sawdust is poured in through the cut-outs in the template to produce the design element. The template is then moved and more elements made, until completed. Size and complexity depends largely on the size of the workforce. Some families gain fame for making their creations year after year. After a crew has made their carpet they often sit close by to watch the reaction of passerbys. Stopping and taking an image makes the carpet maker's day.

Words fail in describing the complexity and beauty of these *alfombras*, so please look at the picture sites listed at the end of the newsletter. They are a sight not to be missed in the middle of an amazing, unique week in Antigua. And in almost an instant, they're gone!

Likeable Links

<http://static.panoramio.com/photos/original/2940819.jpg>

- large sawdust carpet

<http://static.panoramio.com/photos/original/2940802.jpg>

- another large sawdust carpet

<http://www.travelblog.org/Central-America-Caribbean/Guatemala/Capital-Region/Antigua/blog-264152.html>- a very complete personal blog with

descriptions of all the activities of Semana Santa and even a video of a procession

Been There Loved That

PLFM of Antigua, Guatemala - My experience was Superior Plus Plus. I did not become fluent in Spanish in my four weeks, but I gained a firm foundation for continued learning. Starting with almost zero and moving to being able to communicate at least minimally in first person and to understand the underlying structure of the language was

indigenous by the military, government, and higher levels of Guatemala. It is recommended with a caveat, as there has been some controversy if her reports are all accurate or exaggerated. It is an important book to know about, however, if you want a deeper understanding of Guatemala.

Rhythm - *Diez Deditos/ Ten Little Fingers* by José Luis Orozco Audio CD Accompanying book *Diez Deditos and Other Play Rhymes and Action* by José-Luis Orozco In going from a very serious book above, we're going to the other extreme of recommending a children's CD. These are catchy, well pronounced, repetitive songs. If you're trying to improve your pronunciation, this is one of the best ways to do it. Sing along, and the rhythm and sound to carry you along help immensely. And if you're trying to teach Spanish to your children, it's great for them also. If you can't live without knowing exactly in English what the words mean, you can order the accompanying book. All CDs by this artist José-Luis Orozco are rated very highly.

a big achievement for me. My teachers were great, very patient and persistent in the face of my trouble with memorizing words. My host family was wonderful. Sonia and her children were quite patient in speaking Spanish with me and in correcting my pronunciation and word usage. The house was quite comfortable, the food excellent, and the entire family experience stellar. I even had warm water for the shower, the first time I've had warm water in all of my Latin American *viajes* (I typically do nature with almost no time in cities). I felt I was well prepared by both my own reading and the exhaustive instructions Language Link sent me before I left for Antigua. – Kathy Porsch, Grant Development Officer (writer), Lawrence, Kansas

We hope you enjoyed our news. Please see us at www.langlink.com. Call us at 800.552.2051. Central Standard Time with hours 9:00 to 5:00. Meredith Butler, Director U.S. Office
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