



Language Link Line

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Language Link

Your Pass to
Spanish Learning

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Full details of all programs on our
website including fees and dates:
www.langlink.com

Language Link's Latest

What a great summer it has been! We've had Language Link students all over, both as individuals and as groups, large and small. Now we're hard at work on upcoming groups - a multi-age group from Minneapolis to Ecuador in November, several universities to Guatemala in January, a semester group in Costa Rica, a large college group to Chile in May are only a few. What terrific openings for expanding worlds.

Cuba – Our June trip was done through the sponsorship of Martin Luther College for an academic course for credit. We had a range of ages from 26 to 78! We can now easily arrange these and are looking in the future to working with more colleges and universities in this way. They could be a good fundraiser for alumni groups. Let us know if you might like to organize such a group.

We are greatly looking forward to the day when we can offer you study in a Cuban Spanish school, but we may have to wait a while for that reality.

Hints and information about learning Spanish and the people who speak it. Published every other month

What's in this edition

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

What do we do? We represent 20 Spanish schools in 8 different countries and have sent thousands of people of all ages to study Spanish in countries where it is spoken. Our students learn Spanish and live the culture.

OUR BREAKING NEWS! We now finally have in hand our renewed People to People license for legal viajes to CUBA. For all of you have been patiently waiting, the dates of our next viaje will be February 23 – March 3, 2015. Fees and itinerary are being finalized, but they will be similar to our two past viajes. If you are interested and not already on our Cuba mail list, please indicate your interest to kay@langlink.com. We will see that you receive the first announcement, as places fill up quickly.

In the last few years we have added a series of one week culture and language viajes to our regular immersion programs of your choice of location, dates, and length of study time. They have been very successful, and here is the schedule for the upcoming year. Plan ahead!

Culture and Language in Huatulco (Oaxaca, Mexico), a sustainable playa ecoparadise, Sept 6 – 13, two spaces left, \$1,030 all inclusive

Day of the Dead Fiesta in Cuernavaca, one week all inclusive, Oct 26 – Nov 2, \$850 all inclusive

On The Road to Chiapas, language and culture, Nov. 3 – 10, \$1250 all inclusive. Sorry, wait list only. We will repeat Chiapas Nov 2015.

Winter Getaway in Cuernavaca, Feb 1 – 14, 2015, \$850 all inclusive

Cuba Discovery (9 days), Feb 23 – March 3, 2015

Spring Break Fun for all ages - teens, university students

Cuba June 2014
Thank you for a most amazing viaje. I think it was my favorite!! We had a wonderful time with everyone in the group. Plus, the city, the people and the itinerary were top notch. We just loved it! Thank you for taking us and thank you for your organization! Mil gracias.

Upcoming groups – we have a lead for a future diabetes educator group, and we're busy organizing an ecology viaje with language emphasis on ecology and sustainability vocab. We never know what area is going to surface next, as there are so many ways in which Spanish is used.

If you, a teen, college student or grown-up spring breaker want to make your Spring Break **meaningful**, Cuernavaca is now offering a one week all inclusive program for the spring break dates of your choice in March and April. There's no need to be with a pre-formed group, and this gives you great flexibility.

Cocina Cooking

Cuban Ron Cake – Made with what some Cubans call Vitamin R (ron). Okay, this recipe uses many shortcuts at which serious cooks may blanch, but it's easy and quite delicious. A perfect do-ahead dessert.

Ingredients: 1 C. chopped pecans, 1 (18 1/2 oz.) pkg. yellow cake mix, 1 (3 3/4 oz) pkg. vanilla instant pudding & pie filling, 4 eggs, 1/2 C. cold water, 1/2 C. vegetable oil, 1/2 C. dark ron
Glaze: 1/4 lb. butter, 1/4 C. water, 1 C. granulated sugar, 1/2 C. dark ron
Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Grease and flour 10" tube or 12 cup bundt pan. Sprinkle nuts over bottom of pan.

and grown up spring breakers, one week on the dates of your choice in Mar 7 - 28 and Apr 11 - May 2, in Cuernavaca, \$850 all inclusive (can be extended to more weeks)

kay@langlink.com for itineraries or see information in Language Link News section on the home page at www.langlink.com

Online Lesson

Please and Thank You, Ma'am

Each time I enter a medical office waiting area in Mexico, I am reminded of the cultural importance of courtesy. It is common to greet all the fellow patient strangers with an appropriate *Buenos días* or *Buenas tardes*. And then when you depart the office, you will say *Con permiso* to others waiting, sort of a "with your leave". It would be considered quite rude and culturally insensitive to omit these, but I doubt that many of us have this same behavior in a U.S. medical office, as we enter, take our seat, and wordlessly hide behind a well worn magazine.

This same concept extends to the multitude of courtesy phrases used in all Spanish speaking countries. There are many ways of expressing gratitude – from the *muchísimas gracias* to adding *muy amable*. You can never overdo these. And in replying back there is a great variety – *de nada, no hay de que, por nada, ningún problema, para servirle, no es nada*.

Among the more formal public, you would add a title such as *señor, señora, señorita*, or professional title if you know it such as *Ingeniero, Arquitecto*, etc. This is always a problem for Spanish speakers when trying to speak English. They will instinctively add lady or mister. Although it sounds awkward in English, they are simply mimicking the courtesy patterns of Spanish.

And you must be cautious in asking someone to do something, whether in the form of a request or a command. Direct commands can sound a bit demanding to the Spanish attuned ear, so there are many ways around the idea. An all purpose one is to preface what you want with *Me haría el favor de + infinitive*. For instance, with a dinner bill, you can ask the waiter to add a gratuity by saying, *¿Me haría el favor de añadir un quince (por ciento)?* Or – *sería posible + infinitive*. *¿Sería posible usar el teléfono?* Instead of a direct command, try an indirect one beginning with *que* and using the subjunctive (think switchy endings). When asking a driver to wait for you – *Que me espere, por favor*. And it's good to add something like *No tardo mucho*. – I won't be very long.

Another courtesy component is when you haven't understood what has been said. If you use the direct

Mix all cake ingredients together. Pour batter over nuts. Bake 1 hour. Cool. Invert on serving place. Puncture top all over. Drizzle and smooth glaze evenly over top and sides. Allow cake to absorb glaze. Repeat till glaze is used up. For glaze: melt butter in saucepan. Stir in water and sugar. Boil 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Stir in ron. Delicious served with strong Cuban coffee!

Rhythm and Reads

Rhythm – *Rabo de Nube* or *Cuba Classics I* by Silvio Rodríguez – Not well known outside the Spanish speaking world, he is one of the founders of *trova* in Cuba, songs with poetic, political commentary. In *Rabo de Nube* the song *Te Amaré* is a favorite and will give you great examples of the future tense. His words are very easy to understand, and the lyrics are readily available. *El Unicornio* is truly an iconic piece.

Read – Reread a timeless novel, *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway, to visit Cuba through an armchair. It's required reading in Cuban classes and sold on every street corner in Havana, as the Nobel winning novelist is beloved there. Because it's not a long book and its vocabulary is sparse and succinct, it's a superb one to read first in English, then in Spanish.

OJO

If you ever wanted to study in Guatemala for a longer period, this fall at PLFM of Antigua you can receive some unique pricing good only from August – December of 2014. There are one time rates for one on one classes. The ordinary fee for a half day is \$150, and the full day \$200. During this period for studies of three weeks and up, fees are \$135 half and \$185 full, beginning in the third week. You can put quetzales toward a trip to Tikal or Lake Atitlán!

Our ongoing contest is to PLFM of

equivalent of What?, ¿¿Qué??, it sounds very strong such as -what in the world can you be saying? That's crazy. What did you say?? Much better to softly say ¿Cómo?, as in how did you mean that or say that? In Mexico you will hear the almost servile *¿Mande?* Sometimes, *¿Mande usted?* The speaker is not trying to say the English Monday, but it's a form of mandar – to order. Something like – I'm at your service (order me), but I didn't understand what you said.

Also, if you greet everyone in passing with *Hola*, you will sound very much like a turista, as that is often how locals greet them since it is easy and they know it will be understood. However, among native speakers, *hola* is reserved for the start of a conversation, not as a passing greeting. So when you pass someone on the street or greet a shopkeeper or driver, it's best to use *Buenos días*, *buenas tardes* or *buenas noches* (this one used to greet as well as to say goodbye).

It is also common for people to add *Buen día, que le vaya bien*, and the more English influenced one, *que tenga un bonito día*. Your Spanish sounds very fluent if you answer back with a simple *Igualmente* (the same to you), and it is always much appreciated.

So soften up your Spanish in these simple ways, and you will be speaking the language in a much more culturally sensitive way. You'll also avoid looking like an unpolite and rude foreigner when that was never your intention at all.

***I have been a believer in the
mágica of language since,
at a very early age, I
discovered that some words
got me into trouble and
others got me out.-
Katherine Dunn***

Culture Clips

Ah, Cuba. After completing our June viaje with a very wonderful contented group and enduring our long odyssey of the license renewal process, people are asking me...why Cuba? Just as many of you, I have great curiosity about the unique Spanish-speaking country and know that Cuba is in a stage which may soon disappear. The time factor urges me to know it now, before it's gone. But that is a simplistic response to a very complex place. One of our June Cuba participants has expressed it far more eloquently.

Antigua, Guatemala. One week of all one on one classes and a homestay with meals are yours to win. Remember that to enter all you have to do is send us an email and brief comment as shown in the contest description on our website. You'll then be included in the general drawing. ¡Suerte!

Likeable Links

<http://www.infoplease.com/country/cuba.html><http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuba>
<http://www.autenticacuba.com>

Been There Loved That

Instead of our usual student comments, this month we are going to include a synopsis of an article about the benefits (especially to older brains) of studying and learning a foreign language. Titled The Benefits of Failing at French, it appeared July 15, 2014, in the NY Times. Even though this is an experience with French instead of Spanish, many of our more mature students will relate to this. Also, our Language Link students do seem to bridge that great last gap toward competency with their immersion experiences. But even if they don't achieve fluency, read what may have happened to their brains!

By William Alexander, the author of the forthcoming book "Flirting With French: How a Language Charmed Me, Seduced Me, and Nearly Broke My Heart."

I used to say in jest that I spoke French like a 3-year-old. Until I met a French 3-year-old and couldn't hold up my end of the conversation. This was after a year of intense study, including at least two hours a day with self-instruction software, Meet up groups, an intensive weekend class and a steady stream of French movies, followed by what I'd hoped would be the coup de grâce: two weeks of immersion at one of the top language schools in France.

"French resistance" took on an

Reflections on Cuba

By Robert H. Dailey

So I'm on UA 718 from Mexico City to SFO, actually returning from "Planet Cuba". Why Planet Cuba? Because it's like no other place on Planet Earth. It spins in its own space, in an orbit shared by nothing else, in a locus where the sun shines continuously on continuous darkness.

Where nothing makes sense. Where the clocks suddenly stopped 50+ years ago. *Tierra* of incredible agricultural richness lying fallow, rich seas unfished and rationing of all basic foodstuffs of which 70% are imported. Of a people at once riotously exuberant and despairing of all hope for a future. People talk animatedly, smile, *bailan*, touch, couple, laugh....and languish. *La música* is heard everywhere and of every imaginable beat and background - all of it live.

Scaffolded colonial buildings await renovations that never come to pass. Aging leaders in fatigues exhort with revolutionary slogans on crude billboards, proclaiming victory over imaginary enemies. There is adherence to a system of governance that died forever in 1990, a system consigning its people to perpetual poverty, corruption and tyranny; and that yet provides universal medical care, the same life expectancy as the USA, 99% literacy, *educación gratis*, racial equality, and all basic services.

Nothing fits. Nothing functions properly. No one appears to work. No one is paid a living wage. Two different currencies exist side by side- one for Cubans, the other for tourists. The dollar doesn't exist--except in mattresses. Barter, scavenging, black markets, non-money, economics, corruption, chicanery, charity from the Venezuelan government and USA relatives, and survival instinct comprise the economy. State stores sell one style of shoe, one style of pants. Government policy is an illusion. Grand plans marshaling all citizens change overnight, leaving no traces. Sugar cane is the king one day, truck gardens the next. Consistency is a dirty word.

Myths, legends, lies, Santería, tales, suppositions, imaginings, factoids, mysteries are woven into a crazy quilt of a reality which confounds, confuses, and conflicts with and yet confirms itself. It is a place of madness and *mágica*. It eludes all logic or explanation. You grasp it, and as quickly it slips away.

One day, the switch will be thrown and the full force of capitalism will be felt. It may well be gradual, or as in the case of Vietnam, come suddenly. But Cuba will be flooded with investment and capital, the vast energy of its people will be released, and the Cuba that exists today will be no longer be a separate and distinct planet, but rather will

entirely new meaning as my brain repelled every strategy I employed. In the end, though, it turns out that passing a year not learning French may have been the best thing I could've done for my 57-year-old brain.

In the last few years, I'd begun to fret a bit over my literal state of mind. So to reassure myself that nothing was amiss, just before tackling French I took a cognitive assessment called CNS Vital Signs, recommended by a psychologist friend. The results were anything but reassuring: I registered below average for my age group in nearly all of the categories, notably landing in the bottom 10th percentile on the composite memory test and a puny 5 percent on the visual memory test.

This, obviously, did not bode well for my nascent language project, but I forged ahead. To be sure, learning a foreign language is a daunting task for any grown-up. How can something that a toddler accomplishes before learning to tie his shoes be so difficult for grown-ups?

All this means that we as elders have to work our brains hard to learn a second language. But that may be all the more reason to try, for my failed language quest yielded an unexpected benefit. After a year of struggling with the language, I retook the cognitive assessment, and the results shocked me. My scores had skyrocketed, placing me above average in seven of 10 categories, and average in the other three. My verbal memory number leapt from the dismal half to the 88th — the 88th! — percentile and my visual memory test shot from the low-ranking 5th percentile to the 50th. Studying a language had been like drinking from a mental fountain of youth.

Last year researchers at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and Northwestern University in Illinois hypothesized that language study should prove beneficial for older students, noting that the cognitive tasks involved — including working memory, inductive reasoning, sound discrimination and task switching —

spin in the relentless gravity of capital and modernity. Much will be gained and much lost.

We hope you enjoyed our news. Please see us at www.langlink.com.

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map closely to the areas of the brain that are most associated with declines due to aging. In other words, the things that make second-language acquisition so maddening for grown-ups are the very things that may make the effort so beneficial.

The quest for a mental fountain of youth is pursued by baby boomers who fear that their bodies will outlive their brains. There is some evidence that brain exercise programs can be beneficial, but if my admittedly unscientific experience is any indication, you might be better off studying a language instead. Not only is that a far more useful and enjoyable activity than an abstract brain exercise, but as a reward for your efforts, you can treat yourself to a jaunt abroad. Which is why I plan to pass the next year not learning Italian. Ciao! (Language Link thinks he should try Spanish!