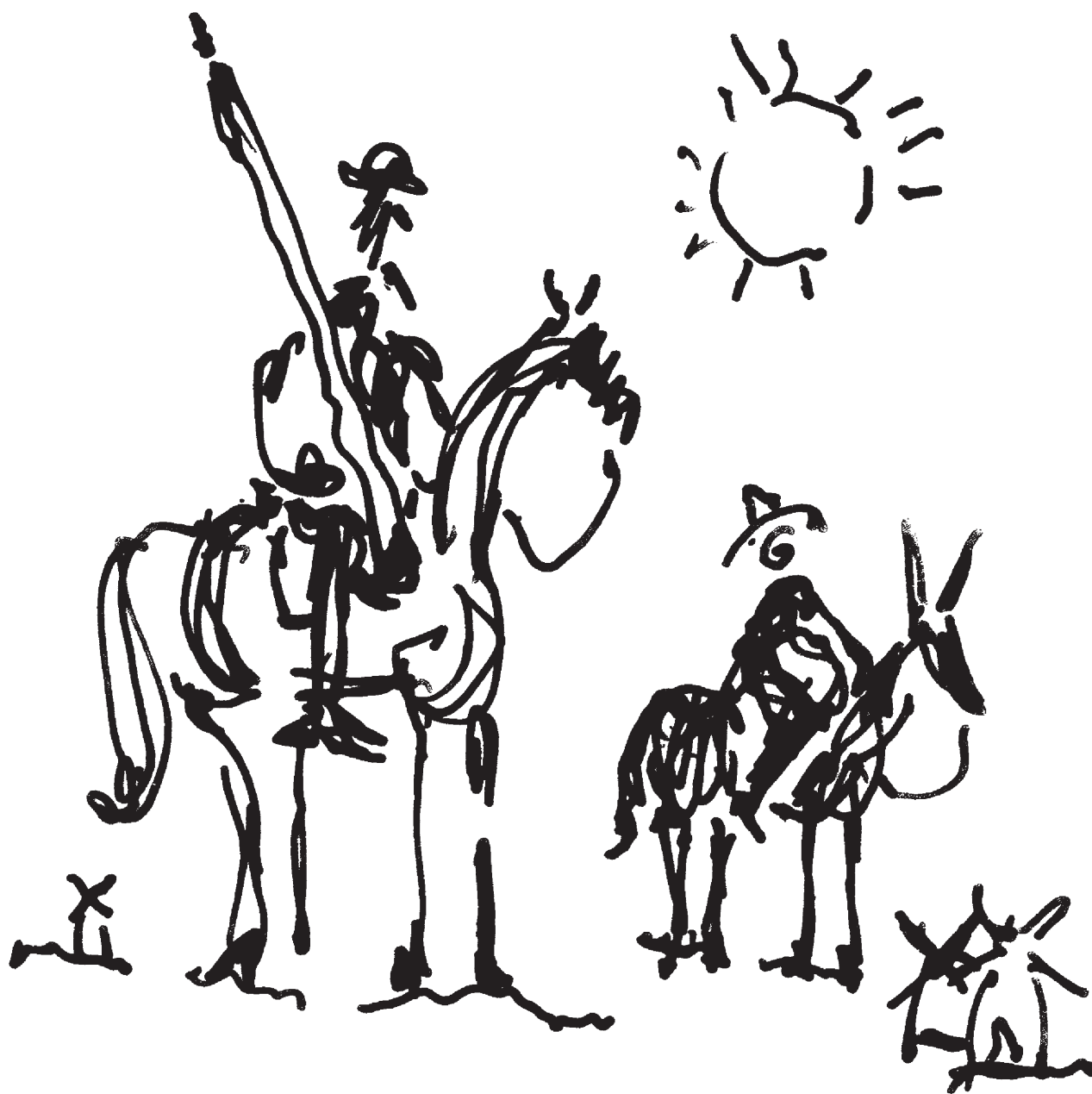


Nuestro idioma



La unidad uno
¡Bienvenidos!





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Unidad 1

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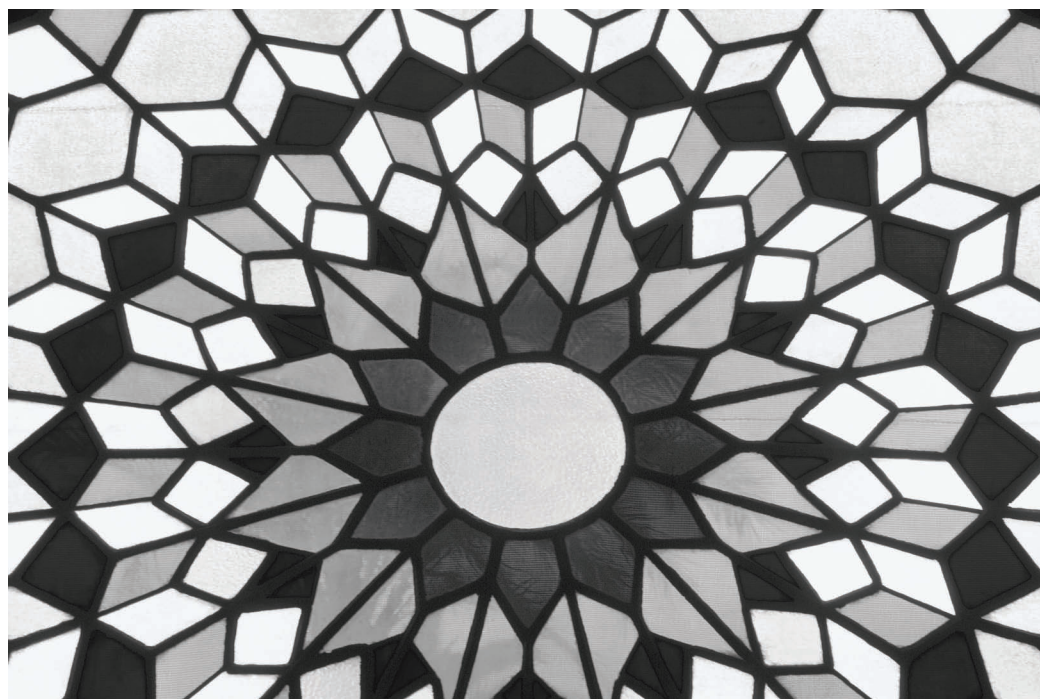
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Mezquita de Córdoba, Andalucía, España

Prefacio

¡Felicitaciones! Congratulations! ¡Bienvenidos! Welcome!

Your presence here tells us that you have made the first step in your commitment to learn Spanish! Good choice! We hope that your learning is fun, challenging and rewarding. Some of you will be a part of this new community for one full year. Others will make a commitment to continue learning during a second year of study. A smaller number of you will continue on to third year of Spanish and beyond. However, regardless of your goals, remember this: we're all in this together, making progress one day at a time.

Your new textbook is called Nuestro idioma (Our Language). The title is an invitation for you to begin to appreciate that rather than studying something outside of your experience, you are in fact now part of a group of millions of persons who share in the experience of the Spanish language and the vast cultural diversity of the many people who share the language. We urge you to get to know our local 'comunidad hispana'. Talk with native speakers as often as you can and merge your focus with the venues of radio, television, video, Internet, newspapers, magazines and local cultural events in Spanish. Feeling included in a group rather than feeling like an outsider will help you to acquire a sense of ownership in your learning experience as well as to gain the perspective that you, together with your classmates, are a part of a community of learners who are all dedicated to this wonderful adventure together.

Language acquisition in the classroom

In the classroom you will be speaking Spanish daily with your new community of learners. Please understand from the very first day that you can comprehend what someone tells you and you can even participate in a dialogue without knowing the English equivalents of all the words you hear and say. (And yes, guessing at meaning is a valuable strategy that we invite you to practice daily!) To help you to comprehend new input, each practice will be framed within a communicative context and there will be contextual clues that will help you to understand the purpose of your communication. A simple example is meeting a person for the first time and introducing yourself in Spanish. In the context of the presentation of the practice, you hear persons saying their names, you see persons shaking hands and then you easily comprehend much of what your classmates and you are saying in Spanish as you complete the practice. Of course, not all language is so easily comprehended. Yet regardless of the level of difficulty, you must take an active role in class in order to maximize language acquisition. To help yourself to maintain this active role, your focus and your motivation, you must:

- Maintain a positive attitude.
- Pay close attention to what is going on around and within you.
- Actively participate in and engage with all classroom activities IN SPANISH.
- Be accepting of your errors and allow yourself to make them.
- Allow yourself to let go and have fun.
- Invite yourself along the way to make logical guesses.
- Consider the context of an exercise.

- Pay very close attention to gestures, visual aids, key words, etcetera.
- Whenever possible, apply in class your knowledge of what you have learned outside of class (through study of your textbook and assignments that you have completed). As you recall what you have learned, you can adjust and edit what you say during in-class dialogues.

The classroom experience is designed to help you to acquire Spanish; your textbook will support acquisition through the learning process. In class, acquisition of language occurs when you comprehend Spanish during the experience of speaking and listening and physical involvement in a specific context. This is like the Spanish that you acquire while living in a Spanish speaking country. As you are actively engaged with others, there are subconscious processes that occur within you that lead to language acquisition. Language acquisition is different from language learning which is the conscious process of studying and memorizing grammatical rules. The acquisition process leads to higher and higher levels of proficiency, which will eventually lead to fluency.

Acquisition, language learning and your textbook

Your textbook will help you to re-experience what you do daily in classroom contexts and, therefore, it will help support the acquisition process. As you reflect on your classroom experience, consider how to modify and edit it as you deem necessary and involve yourself in additional practice with and study of the classroom material. You will also acquire language as you actively engage (in a strategic way) in reading in Spanish in Nuestro idioma. As you understand what you read, you are receiving the message that you are acquiring language. When you speak or write, your acquired language is identifiable when you make choices for language use based on what “feels right” “sounds right” or “know is right” in your gut. Learning, on the other hand, occurs through understanding grammatical rules, memorizing, consciously discerning regular and irregular language patterns, etc. The textbook will lead you into and through the learning process as you memorize vocabulary in meaningful contexts, learn verb tenses, verb endings, study sentence structure, etcetera. Written assignments will allow you to apply and to further develop this knowledge. Outside of the classroom, to help yourself to maintain an active role as a language learner, you must:

- Get organized (familiarize yourself with your textbook and other materials and know how to find what you need to find).
- Study regularly (preferably as soon after class as possible).
- Review often.
- Apply relevant learning strategies that will be introduced and practiced in the classroom.
- Consider and mentally categorize the logical patterns of language such as masculine, feminine, singular and plural endings of nouns and adjectives, etcetera.
- Role play dialogues alone or with a partner as you pay close attention to pertinent aspects of language structure.
- Consider how your textbook supports what you do in class.
- Seek the help of your instructor and/or a tutor when needed.
- Complete all assignments.
- Study the errors you have made on your written work and make a concerted effort to correct them and thus to learn from them.

Using Nuestro idioma

Nuestro idioma contains your class notes. Study them (and review them!) carefully and often. What are your “class notes”? They are complete and detailed versions of the exercises that you practice in class. Since they are detailed and informative, you will not need to take notes in class. Instead, you will be able to place your attention where it needs to be from moment to moment in class so that you can maximize your acquisition of the language.

From the start, your book will immerse you in the language as you begin to practice in meaningful communicative contexts (to acquire language in class) and to study, edit, and memorize (to learn at home). For example, during lesson one in class you will:

- Practice the sounds of vowels, syllables and words.
- Link the meanings of words to pictures.
- Practice sensing the rhythm of a sentence.
- Practice techniques to physically engage in practice and to aid in recall.
- Identify animals through dialogue.
- Practice dividing words into syllables.
- Link numbers to animals in pictures.
- Engage in a conversation about animals and the sounds they make.
- Practice the sounds of numbers from 0 to 59 and link the words and sounds to the corresponding numerical digits.
- Pronounce the names of Spanish speaking nations.
- Practice a dialogue about the pronunciation of numbers and nations.

At home, after each class session you will:

- Study and reflect on the recent class practices.
- Review material from earlier practices.
- Involve yourself in role-play (speaking aloud) alone or with a partner the dialogues practiced in class.
- Practice the sounds as you did in class both verbally and with the physical techniques used in class.
- Read aloud the words you’ve practiced, write them and divide them into syllables.
- Study grammatical explanations and, when indicated to do so (in Nuestro idioma), study relevant pages in English Grammar for Students of Spanish.
- Proceed to complete assignments based on the class/textbook content.

Additional suggestions on how to approach your home study

Here are some additional suggestions on how to approach your home study of new material. These recommendations are actually strategies for approaching your study tasks in a systematic way. Give them a try and then feel free to take an active role in modifying them to suit your learning needs:

- Take a sheet of paper and cover all but the first heading on any given page of Nuestro idioma.
- Read aloud the first heading and the information that accompanies it. Ask yourself, “What have I done in class that looks and sounds like this?”

- Study the conversational structures (E1 and E2 refer to Estudiante 1 and Estudiante 2) and read them aloud considering the context and supplying the missing elements in the blank spaces.
- If you do not understand the material in this first section, create a hypothesis/guess and test it out on your homework assignment. Your hypothesis may simply feel like a guess, but keep in mind that there are language-learning processes that are happening silently within you and so those “guesses” are most likely not really guesses at all. Still, if you are feeling confused and unable to create a hypothesis at this time, make a note that you do not feel confident with this part and move on to the next heading. (Be prepared to go to drop-in tutoring or to your instructor’s office hour if you do not understand the concepts after repeated exposure to them in class and after repeated attempts to understand them during home study.)

Reading in Spanish

The entire textbook is a reading experience in Spanish. During your study you will read class practices and brief grammatical explanations in Spanish and you will have several opportunities to read selections on cultural aspects of the Spanish speaking world. As you continue to use your text for study and preparation of assignments, you will find that your reading proficiency will improve and that you will be able to comprehend increasingly more sophisticated language. As with speaking, it will not be necessary to understand every word. Instead, you should:

1. Concentrate your attention on the headings/titles of each section (they provide information on the context).
2. Read and concentrate on the text line by line, using what you know to guide you and to help you to make logical, informed hypotheses/guesses at meaning.
3. Read the same part of text a second or third time. Repetition will allow you to create even more hypotheses and to confirm your comprehension of what you read.

Writing in Spanish

You will complete several writing assignments. Your instructor will provide information on how s/he wants you to practice this skill. Please begin your writing as soon as your instructor assigns your homework. In order to develop this important skill (which also helps you with the other skill areas), you will need to complete a good deal of study and writing practice. Budget your time so that you can write some every day rather than waiting until the last minute before an assignment is due. The rewards will be well worth the generous effort you dedicate to developing your writing skill. Keep in mind that this is a beginning Spanish class. Stick with class content and class practice structures. You may be surprised by how much you can write and how creative you can be while staying within the parameters of class content. ¡Buena suerte!

Final observations

You will soon notice that Nuestro idioma brings vocabulary and language structure together into meaningful communicative contexts. During your daily quest to achieve comprehension in class, unconscious processes will be at work to help you achieve comprehension (language acquisition)

and you will actively support those processes by believing in yourself, creating hypotheses and engaging in lots of practice, study and memorization (language learning).

During home study, practice the vocabulary in context as you did in class rather than attempting to learn the words in lists outside of their meaningful communicative contexts. The grammatical aspects of the practice are designed so that you can practice them in class without concerning yourself too much about rules since your concern will be about comprehension. At home, you will find examples, short explanations and clarifications of grammatical aspects and you will be directed to study grammatical structures and rules in your ancillary text English Grammar for Students of Spanish. Please recall that grammar study is important. Grammar is a description of real spoken and written language. Although grammar study involves you in the process of talking about language rather than the process of acquiring language, your study and understanding of grammatical structure will help you to become a better speaker, listener, reader and writer, and you will grasp material in and out of class much more easily.

Relax! Have fun! Be involved! Take risks! Practice and study everyday! Believe in yourself and the processes of acquisition and learning! Get help when needed! Learn from your successes and your errors! Keep your attitude positive!

¡Sí se puede!
¡Comencemos!



Puerta del Sol, Lago Titicaca Bolivia