

No Hablo Español
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After two years of Spanish class, my knowledge of Spanish is still relatively negligible. I mean, behind all of the words ending in “-o” and my slight ability to roll my “r’s,” hides a boy who has always tried to learn the language in the stupidest ways.

I think my first real teacher of Spanish was the VeggieTales song “The Dance of the Cucumber.” What it consisted of was a cucumber in a sombrero (which isn’t a stereotype because all Spanish cucumbers wear sombreros), dancing and singing a song in Spanish while a tomato translated. I’m not sure what was more startling: the animated talking vegetables, or that fact that I still remember how to say the Spanish version, “Poor tomato. He wish he could dance like the cucumber.”

But back then, I wasn’t focusing so much on the actual words, so much as how they sounded, which is how I learned most songs in those days. *N’sync’s “Bye, Bye, Bye” was “Baa, Baa, Baa” for a while. I thought it was a song about sheep.

So I still didn’t know any actual Spanish words; I just knew phrase soundalikes, which could be helpful if I ever needed to talk about cucumbers doing the cha-cha. After that, my knowledge sat dormant, until Freshman year of high school when I was introduced to something on the internet called the BabelFish translator, which was supposed to translate any written text into another language. To me, it was basically a way to write in code, assuming that—I don’t know—HALF the country already spoke in that code. I was so young, so young.

I wrote down four notecards-worth of handy Spanish phrases (I still have the notecards). These phrases included poorly translated versions of “I don’t speak Spanish” (No hablo español), “What’s love got to do, got to do with it?” and “Why did the road cross the chicken?” As you can probably guess, Freshman year was kind of an awkward year for me... and all of the years after that, actually.

So, once again, I increased my knowledge of helpful Spanish phrases, and I mean ‘helpful’ in the sense that it would have been helpful in the Dr. Seuss part of Spain.

Then I realized that I had to take foreign language classes to graduate (and most colleges require at least two years). Stupidly thinking that I already had a jumpstart on

this specific language, I signed up, expecting the biggest blow-off class ever. I mean, I knew what “pollo de muerto” meant; how many Spanish words can there be, anyway? Unbeknownst to me, there are over 50 different Spanish words on the Taco Bell menu alone.

I was screwed.

I ended up learning many things in my first year of Spanish. I can’t recall them now, but I remember that—at the time—there were important. Of what I do remember were three important facts about the Spanish language:

1) The word “Spanish” originates from the Latin word “Spanish” which means “language that comes from Mexico.”

2) English is a harder language to learn than Spanish. (This is obviously not true. I’m sorry el profesor, but I just learned what the English word ‘flibbertigibbet’ meant. Does anyone know how to say that in Spanish? Doubtful.)

3) “Yo” means “I.”

Attempting to coast through the class proved fruitless by halfway through the semester and I barely got through with a passing grade (or gradé). It was clear that I could not grasp the concepts of conjugating verbs or masculine/feminine words, and there was only one thing I could do: I took the next class up.

Estupido? Si.

Spanish II was exactly what I expected it to be: a bitch. Here we used the basics we learned in Spanish I (well, everyone else learned and I faked) and learned practically EVERY OTHER WORD IN THE SPANISH LANGUAGE to be used in conjunction with the principles acquired previously. The food chapter was easy (remember, I already knew ‘cucumber’ and ‘tomato’) and the weather chapter was a breeze (har har), but besides that, I struggled. My saving grace was a day halfway through the year when the teacher showed us a movie dubbed in Spanish. Finally, a break from the day-to-day barrage of words. Plus, Ice Age is five times funnier in a foreign language.

Again, I barely passed. I attribute my success to me cheating off my neighbor’s tests and my Rico Suave-like charm. Hey, all’s fair in love, war, and español.

After that, speaking Spanish didn’t come up again until Guitar Hero World Tour came out last year. “Sure,” I said. “I’ll sing vocals on La Bamba. No sweat.”

Unfortunately, as soon as the song started, I realized that the only part of the song I knew was “La-la-la-la-bamba!” so I quickly learned to sing that much over the rest of the lyrics.

So now that it is almost 2010 and soon the primary language spoken in America will be Spanish (especially with all the immigrants coming in from Canada), you may be wondering how boned I am.

Personally, I think I’m fine. Maybe it’s my Oscar De La Hoya personality that wants me to fight this new trend with everything I have. Either way, I’m signed up for a Spanish class next semester, and armed with my notecards and VeggieTales DVD’s, I’m ready. Bring it on, por favor.