
Dos Mundos: A Communicative Approach

Vital Statistics

Title: *Dos Mundos: A Communicative Approach*

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Intended Users: Beginning College Students

Language: Spanish

Overview

Dos Mundos is a complete program using Terrel's natural approach plus some aspects of Krashen's theories on acquisition, learning, monitoring, input, natural order of development, and positive affective conditions to develop students' abilities to understand and speak "everyday" Spanish in practical communication. It is comprised of an instructor's edition (glossed with explanations and directions, and containing instructor's manual) student text, student workbook, testing package, audio-video program, and tapescripts. In addition, the instructor is encouraged to develop a personal "picture file" for use in initiating conversations-descriptions.

Since input plays the major role in acquisition, the instructor is advised to speak only in Spanish. Students are told to concentrate on the message without translating, and both student and instructor are reminded that speech emergence begins with comprehension, evolves into "early speaking" of words or partial phrases, and develops into the expression of complete thoughts often characterized by errors. Instructors and students are encouraged not to worry about the "fossilization" of errors but to trust that it will disappear with practice and learning, and that social (situational) and linguistic (form) discussion proficiencies will also be developed

in practice. The teacher's manual suggests that the teacher use "Usted" in interactions with students; students, however, use "tu" with one another as they work in pairs or small groups, thus providing realistic and continuous practice using both forms.

Oral activities include model, scrambled, open and situational dialogues, interviews, narration, activities in matching association, expressing personal opinions, Total Physical Response (TPR), and photo-centered input activities. The instructor is advised to use visual aids (objects or materials) to help learning and to develop interaction between himself or herself and students, and among the students themselves in natural, relaxed, spontaneous situations.

The basic text is organized into five *pasos* or "first steps" and 15 lessons. Pasos A-E are designed to encourage the transition from comprehension to an ability to articulate short (1-2 word) responses. By the end of the fifth paso, students are expected to have made the transition to longer answers and complete sentences which may be characterized by grammatical errors eventually correctable through "monitoring." Group work in pairs or small groups is encouraged. Goals, suggestions, guidelines, and expectations are provided in the glosses on each page.

Each chapter in the text is divided into three parts: 1) oral activities, vocabulary, and readings focused on developing speaking ability; 2) additional readings; and 3) grammar and exercises. Each lesson includes pre-text oral activities such as warm up/practice questions and new words/vocabulary review. Goals, activities, previews of *lecturas*, and suggestions on how to use the readings or how to recognize cognates are given along with suggested questions and answers. Cultural information (particularly useful for the beginning teacher) is provided occasion-

ally in the glosses (ex: VIASA is the national airline of Venezuela, p. 377; The present perfect is commonly used in Spain but not used much in L.A., p. 364; It is much more difficult for women to be independent and professionally successful in Hispanic culture because of a strong tradition of male domination, p. 505.)

A normal hour of instruction is planned to consist of from three to seven acquisition activities based on oral and comprehension activities in both text and workbook. Grammar and exercises—found in the workbook—are meant to be done as homework.

The workbook is organized like the text. Each chapter contains three activities with tapes, consisting of comprehension, pronunciation, spelling, and writing activities. Students **must** listen to the tapes to complete the workbook exercises which lead them through the activities step by step. Explanations are given clearly in English, and all activities are carried out in Spanish. The workbook serves as both an oral laboratory manual and a writing manual, providing practice in the largely neglected skill of writing (from the first lesson). Exercises on orthographic and pronunciation rules are included in each lesson; practice is provided in pronunciation and spelling as well.

Comprehension activities include recorded oral texts of various types: dialogues, narratives, newscasts, interviews, and radio/TV commercial announcements. Each oral activity is accompanied by a list of new vocabulary, a drawing that “orients” students to the context, verification activities, and comprehension questions.

Three groups of persons are used to present the oral activities in a variety of accents: a group of American students studying Spanish; 2) a group of Hispanics who live and work in different countries (Mexico, Puerto Rico, Spain, Venezuela, Argentina, Columbia, and a Cuban living in Miami); and, 3) fictitious characters from a fictitious Mexican soap opera which takes place primarily in a neighborhood of an average Mexican city. This “telenovella” begins in Paso A with simple greetings which are interspersed with music to make the listening more pleasant.

These characters reappear consistently throughout the text, adding an element of unity to activities and exercises.

Oral activities provide students with the opportunity to hear and speak Spanish by concentrating on the topic rather than on Spanish **per se**. Students are told that as long as they are listening to Spanish they are acquiring it; they are advised to relax and not worry about understanding every word; instead, they should concentrate on ideas and not mistakes. Furthermore, they are encouraged to expand on conversations, saying as much as they can, even paraphrasing whenever necessary.

Vocabulary lists in each lesson facilitate reference and review. These include words students should RECOGNIZE and which will be used “actively” later.

The grammar and the exercises sections of the workbook may be used as a study and reference manual. Short explanations of the rules of morphology, syntax, and word usage are provided followed by examples. Oral activities often have a marginal note “ojo!” referring to the grammar section. Most exercises are short and contextualized.

TPR activities are included in each lesson to train students to listen for key words. Students are not expected to understand every word used in the directions, but enough to perform the action called for, even if they must sometimes pause to first observe others.

Readings are NOT meant to be translated; rather, students are told to listen for the GIST or meaning of passages by noting key words. Four skills are practiced: 1) scanning; 2) skimming; 3) intensive reading; and, 4) extensive reading. Students are advised to use a dictionary only when an unknown word or words prevent understanding a main idea. Unknown words and grammar are purposely included in most readings to accustom students to skipping over unimportant details and striving for understanding.

Written activities are included in all lessons. In Paso A they are more like games, consisting of cross word puzzles, etc. In B, students are

asked to complete and combine sentences. Writing—a little practiced skill—thus begins early and builds logically as students are asked to answer questions, describe something, tell who something belongs to, rearrange words for logical sentences, use prepositions correctly to describe locations, or write short paragraphs describing themselves or someone else. Writing activities are always coordinated with the topical-situational syllabus of the oral activities and become increasingly open-ended as the student progresses through the course.

Spelling drills are on tape. Rules and practice are provided on the silent h, the differences between g, j; y and ll; sc, and z; and, ce and ci.

Videos are also available, mainly to develop listening comprehension.

Tests in the test booklet provide vocabulary, reading, and listening tests for each chapter. These are primarily true or false, completion or multiple choice exercises. Tapescripts are provided for oral testing.

Limitations

Because *Dos Mundos* is designed as a complete learning program rather than a simple textbook, the sheer quantity of materials and directives aimed at the instructor may seem somewhat daunting and overwhelming. The authors provide thorough theoretical explanations of Terrel's natural method and Krashen's hypotheses, as well as rationales for the various kinds of exercises and

activities used. They also provide numerous suggestions and examples (complete with likely responses).

For the beginning instructor, this combination methodology manual, glossed text, and teacher's guide has distinct advantages, since it assists the teacher at every turn to know what to do, understand why it is being done, and thereby prepares him or her for a predicted level of performance expectations. For the more experienced teacher, however, this plethora of material could prove burdensome.

Nevertheless, *Dos Mundos* is superbly designed to achieve the communicative competence which is its goal. On balance, the thoroughness of the teaching aids is most likely an asset, since anyone who reads them carefully will come away reminded (or introduced to) helpful teaching techniques. All materials were extensively field-tested and revised through numerous versions, resulting in an immanently "do-able" classroom program.

Materials are sufficiently complete to make *Dos Mundos* an excellent choice not only for ordinary classroom use, but also for intensive courses or guided self-instructional courses.

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