Introduction for Teachers

The CantoCapto program uses several methods to help Spanish speakers learn English quickly and easily. Most people have work and responsibilities which limit the amount of time that they can study.

This program is set up for a weekly 90 minute class for adults. Each chapter includes a playlist of songs on YouTube for the students to listen to (and sing along with!) between classes to keep the learning ongoing.

Philosophy

We believe people learn languages through:

LISTENING   MENTORING   EXPERIENCE   REPETITION

We believe people remember things through emotional connections, frequent use, and sensory stimulation.

For **listening**, we provide song lists for the students to hear between classes. The chosen songs repeat words and phrases that were emphasized in the prior class. We remind students frequently in the first few classes that it is OK to only understand a few words in a song. The important thing is for students to listen for the words they have learned in the class. Through the songs they will learn to distinguish the words in English and hear the words in a variety of contexts.

You are the **mentor**. Many successful language programs encourage their students to find a mentor: someone who can practice speaking with them and answer questions. Have fun with the students and point out often what they are doing right. Sometimes, you can correct a mistake, but it is also helpful to repeat sentences after the students to show how you, as a native speaker, would say the words.

To build **experience** the program has the students speaking in English from the beginning. If the students can read out loud, have them do that. If you need to read a word or line, have the students repeat those words out loud to you. As soon as possible, have the students return to reading out loud themselves, with you correcting pronunciation gently as needed.

A fast way to learn something is to use the new information as soon as possible. This program provides exercises and games to practice new words and phrases.   Some people are competitive and their eagerness to win a game will help them learn new words and phrases quickly. The students **repeat** words and phrases over and over while playing the game, and you will soon after hear them using those words and phrases in normal conversations.

The songs provided in the playlists also provide repetition. Moreover, all the important words we introduce in a chapter are reviewed in later chapters again and again. We expect students to gradually become familiar with the words, not to be able to recite them back perfectly when they return the next week.

The exercises are written to have surprises, even with a beginner's vocabulary. By engaging the students' imaginations, the exercises can stretch the students' **emotional** engagement with English

and the relevance of the language for their own lives.

Bring toys, pictures, games, activities, dolls, and other props for the students to use in class. A scary tiger or a flashy toy car can help the students associate the words with the objects they are holding. If you can bring a bag or a box to class and then pull out surprising objects, the students will enjoy wondering what you have brought. Props do not need to cost anything; a box of pasta from your pantry, a library book with a surprising cover, or a wildflower can all be unexpected props that add whimsy and boost student interest. Maybe you don't have a plastic tiger, but you might have a plastic horse or a plastic ice scraper or a plastic spoon. Aside from the mental interest that new objects add, the **sensory** experience of engaging with the objects while using English helps makes the words and phrases more memorable.

We hope the pages, the suggestions, the pictures, the games and the songs provide a fun and easy way to teach English.

Preparations Before Class

Each chapter includes a teacher's guide with a list of materials to prepare before class. We strongly recommended providing printed pages to students each class so that

- students can take notes during class
- students have a physical, visual reminder to keep practicing during the week
- students feel like they have received something tangible from attending the class
- students do not have to remember to bring anything with them to class

Most pages (other than the Color lesson!) can be printed in black-and-white if necessary to control costs, but not all images may be clear in black-and-white. The teacher's guide indicates which pages we suggest printing in color.

Although students do not need to bring anything with them to class, teachers should bring the materials from earlier chapters. We re-use some cards from earlier chapters in activities in later chapters, and if you have a little extra time in a class you can use it to practice via some of the earlier games.

Because all the content is freely available online, a student who misses a class can look over the materials from the missed content or even practice with a classmate before the next class to get caught up.

Gathering

Keep the classroom interaction informal. We recommend arranging the class at shared tables instead of desks, with 1 or 2 instructors per table and up to 5 students per table. One instructor can certainly teach alone, but with two instructors you can model dialogs to make it easier for students to see what you want them to say.

From the second time you meet onward, as students enter the room start with the usual "How are you"

conversation. Students will likely need help to get through the whole conversation for the first few weeks, but after that they will be confident.

Start each class by asking students whether they have any questions. This empowers students by giving them a little control over class content and makes sure that their priorities are being met. At your discretion, you can answer the questions at that time or after class, or even in the next class if you want to take some time to research the answer. Make sure students understand when to expect an answer.

Class Order

The teacher's guide for each chapter provides a recommended order for that class's content. It's usually best to start with the Vocab pages so that students understand the new words and how to use them, then move to Activities to practice the new words, then Pronunciation to build skills. However, you are welcome to adjust the order to what works best for your students.

When doing a **Vocab** page, have students read aloud as much as possible. Let students guess the pronunciation of words and show by your encouragement and gentle correction that it is fine when they guess incorrectly. Pause frequently to act out with exaggerated emotion the words a student just read, and have students practice saying the sentences, too. Where a page provides a dialog or explains how to build questions, we often take a multi-stage approach to practicing:

1. Student reads a small part of the page aloud (e.g. "Do you know Tom?" "No I don't. Nice to meet you Tom.")
2. Instructor runs through the same dialog with a student (e.g. "Do you know Pedro?"), helping the student as needed with his/her part
3. Instructor runs through the same dialog with each student
4. Instructor encourages students to practice the same dialog with each other

One side of a page can easily take 10 – 15 minutes to complete this way, even though it would only take 2 or 3 minutes to read aloud without any practicing.

Many of the **Activities** include cards to print on letter size paper or card stock. The number in the corner of a card shows the earliest chapter in which students start to use the words on that card. To save paper, some cards from later chapters are included in the printouts for earlier chapters, so watch the numbers to ensure that you only present words that students are learning by the current chapter. The numbers also help with sorting cards after a class.

The chapter-specific lesson guides include suggestions for using the cards and games to play with the cards. Feel free to use the cards with many of the chapters, and to repeat a game in later weeks if students enjoy the game and need to practice those words.

Each English vowel has many possible **pronunciations**. We start looking closely at pronunciations in the third chapter, and over several following chapters we look gradually at the possible pronunciations, which are like keys for a lock. Once the students have learned this set of keys, when they see a new word they can try each key (each possible pronunciation) to hear the possibilities and perhaps recognize the word.

Instead of speaking about "rules" in the English language, we speak about patterns. Sometimes people assume a "rule" is always true, and are distressed when they learn about exceptions to that rule. If we talk about patterns that are true for some words, this makes it easier and faster to learn English without unrealistic expectations.

Near the end of each class show students where they can access the **Song Descriptions and Playlists** for this chapter on the CantoCapto.com website. Have students read the bilingual **About the Songs** page and emphasize to students that we do not expect them to understand the words in the songs on the playlists. Students sometimes worry because they only understand a few words from each song. Make sure students know that all they need to do is listen to the song and try to hear that song's "Important Words."

The Song Descriptions page provides the "Important Words" for each song and a short explanation of what the song is about. Instead of taking class time to read through all this, make sure students see where the "Important Words" are on the website and let the students enjoy exploring the song information on their own during the week. The songs are extremely varied in style, mood, tempo, etc., so the students' curiosity will also draw them to listen. To keep this feeling like a fun independent activity, not an assignment, we generally don't ask students much about the songs when they return the next week. However, students will sometimes volunteer their thoughts about a particular song.

Make sure each student successfully accesses the current chapter's Song Descriptions and the playlists before they leave class. A student who has successfully accessed the website once is more likely to return to it during the week. Encourage students to listen to the songs often during the week.

Make sure students know when and where to meet for the next week's class.

Expectations

If you are not able to complete all the content for one chapter during one class, that is OK. It is better to go at the pace that your students can absorb than to go too fast and leave students feeling frustrated or discouraged. If you don't complete all the content for a chapter, you can ask students to listen to playlists from earlier chapters until the next class. Review is a good thing!

While we expect students to participate fully in class and try saying many things, we don't expect students to produce the current chapter's vocabulary fluently after only 90 minutes. It's normal for students to forget a word or phrase during the week or by a couple weeks later. For this reason, we review the same words over and over during later chapters and eventually the words will become part of the students' natural vocabulary.

It is also normal for students to have an occasional "off" week (really a neural rebuilding week) in which students seem to be less fluent than they were earlier. If these are students who have been coming to class and practicing faithfully, then this is likely an indication that they are subconsciously solidifying their recently-gained knowledge, and in another week or two they will jump forward.

A friendly email with a link to the current chapter's page on the CantoCapto site sent midway through the week can help students remember to keep practicing. An email sent the day before class with a reminder of the upcoming class date, time, and location can boost attendance. Use BCC when sending emails so that students do not receive each other's email addresses.

Have patience – and fun! – and you will be surprised by how much your students learn in just a few months.