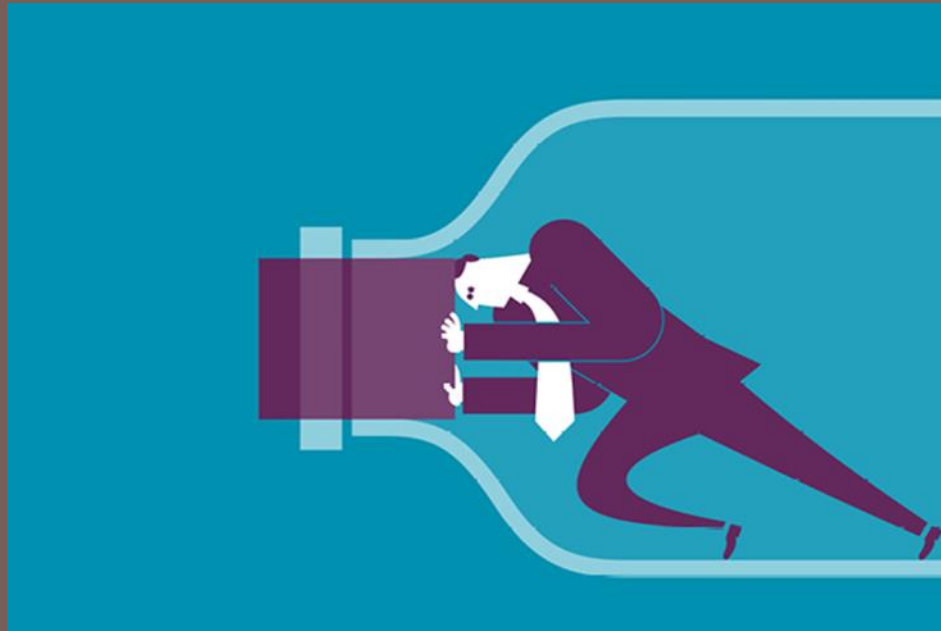


# CLEARING THE MORPHOLOGICAL BOTTLENECK



Romance LEARN Workshop  
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**DIRECT ACTION**



**MILITARY INFORMATION SUPPORT OPERATIONS**



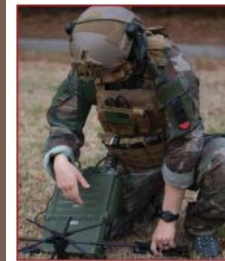
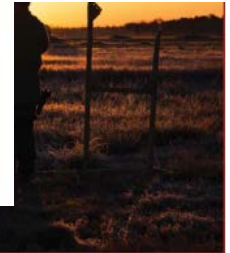
**CIVIL AFFAIRS**



**FOREIGN INTERNAL DEFENSE**



**UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE**



- Traditional foreign language teaching approaches are problematic.
- Our learners appear to end up in bottlenecks.
- The vast majority of our learners are L1 English speakers, and English is different than many of the languages we teach.

- **The Morphological Bottleneck (Slabakova, 2008)**
  - Some L2 learners reach a point at which their acquisition stalls.
  - For morphologically complex languages, this stalling is caused by a failure to make morphological form-meaning connections.

- **Input Processing and Structured Input (VanPatten, 2017)**
  - The learners' attention must be drawn to less salient linguistic elements in order for learner to make form-meaning connections.
  - The learners' own processing strategies can interfere with their noticing these elements, making it more difficult for them to make form-meaning connections.
    - Learners process input for meaning before they process it for form.
    - Grammatical forms that encode the same meaning as lexical items will be ignored.
    - More meaningful forms will overshadow less meaningful ones
    - Learners tend to focus on the beginnings and the ends of utterances and get lost in the middle.
    - Learners tend to process the first noun they encounter in a sentence as the subject or agent.

# What can we do?

6

**4 Tips**

# 1

Don't teach grammar  
with unfamiliar words.

- Take 5-10 minutes to chat with the learners about their daily routines **in English** a few days or a week before you begin this topic.
  - What verbs do you think your learners would mention?



*“Yeah. Uh, no. Normally, uh, my typical day starts, I get in about 8:30ish. Uh, I normally catch up on my email or socialize a little bit around the office to get an idea of what’s been going on. Normally my day really, really gets started, uh, around nine. Uh, it’s either with a, a meeting or closing up some, uh, paperwork. Um, sometimes the, uh, I work in the language lab and we’ve got classes going on, it’s just sometimes it, uh, working with the classes or something of that sort. Now that will we take me almost till lunchtime normally, uh, then about after lunch, I don’t know, we ended up, uh, I’m stuck on email most of the day. Um, just basically a knock out little tasks that come up or work on a smaller projects we have ongoing and, uh, four o’clock, I’ve got a meeting or like not so much a close-out meeting but more of like a synchronization meeting for like to be carried over to the next day. And then, uh, after that meeting I come down, uh, try to close up about five o’clock at night and sometimes take my computer home to keep working at home or I just get to go home.”*

*Algunos verbos con que empezar:*

*comenzar*

*llegar a*

*ponerse al día (con)*

*hablar/charlar con alguien*

*reunirse con alguien*

*trabajar (en)*

*almorzar*

*contestar*

*responder*

*completar*

*terminar*

*llevar*

*regresar*

*cerrar*

*“Yeah. Uh, no. Normally, uh, my typical day starts, I get in about 8:30ish. Uh, I normally catch up on my email or socialize a little bit around the office to get an idea of what’s been going on. Normally my day really, really gets started, uh, around nine. Uh, it’s either with a, a meeting or closing up some uh paperwork*

*Um,  
lab a  
some  
some  
me a  
about  
uh, I  
just  
up o  
ongo  
meet  
meet*

*meeting for like to be carried over to the next day. And then, uh, after that meeting I come down, uh, try to close up about five o'clock at night and sometimes take my computer home to keep working at home or I just get to go home.”*

*Algunos verbos con que empezar:*

*comenzar*

*llegar a*

*ponerse al día (con)*

**Collect a similar set of verbs by asking about what they do in their free time.**

*terminar*

*llevar*

*regresar*

*cerrar*

- You can then make the verbs familiar by:
  1. Teaching them in the modal + infinitive structure *tengo que + infinitivo* for obligations.
  2. Teaching them in the modal + infinitive structure *me gusta + infinitivo* for recreational activities.
  
- This will prepare them to work on conjugation later.
  - They will already know their meanings and will be better able to focus on the present tense endings.

# 2

Teach one thing at a time.

	<b>hablar</b>	<b>comer</b>	<b>vivir</b>
<b>yo</b>	<b>hablo</b>	<b>como</b>	<b>vivo</b>
<b>tú</b>	<b>hablas</b>	<b>comes</b>	<b>vives</b>
<b>usted</b>	<b>habla</b>	<b>come</b>	<b>vive</b>
<b>él, ella</b>	<b>habla</b>	<b>come</b>	<b>vive</b>
<b>nosotros, -as</b>	<b>hablamos</b>	<b>comemos</b>	<b>vivimos</b>
<b>ustedes</b>	<b>hablan</b>	<b>comen</b>	<b>viven</b>
<b>ellos, -as</b>	<b>hablan</b>	<b>comen</b>	<b>viven</b>

hablar

comer

vivir

There's a lot going on here:

1. 3 different types of verbs (-ar, -er, -ir).
2. 3 different words for *you*.
3. 5 different personal endings.
4. And *nosotras* and *ellas*, what do those mean?

no

Split this paradigm!

ellos, -as

hablan

comen

viven

- Teach the –ar class first, then the –er/-ir.
- Teach each person by itself in a separate lesson:
  - Third person singular first – this is the simplest form.
  - Then first and second singular;
  - Then the plural forms, each separately;
  - This gives a total of 12 lessons (6 persons x 2 conjugations)
- Don't contrast the persons until they can reliably understand and produce each one.
- Don't put too much focus on irregular forms, stem changing verbs, or reflexive verbs.
  - Giving students long lists of exceptions and irregularities distracts them from working on fluency.
  - Teach these features as they occur.

Teach the *er* class first, then the *or/ir* class

Tips 1 and 2 give you a 24-hour (1 week for intensive study) group of lessons:

1. Describing obligations with *tengo que* + infinitive.
2. Describing recreational activities with *me gusta* + infinitive.
3. Comparing obligations and things you do in your free time.
4. Scheduling meetings and appointments.
  - A. Third person singular (-ar, then -er/-ir)
  - B. First person singular (-ar, then -er/-ir)
  - C. Second person singular (-ar, then -er/-ir)
    - Yes-no question intonation
    - Wh- questions
5. Making plans for the weekend.
  - A. Third person plural (-ar, then -er/-ir)
  - B. First person plural (-ar, then -er/-ir)
  - C. Second person plural (-ar, then -er/-ir)
    - Yes-no question intonation
    - Wh-questions
6. Review

Teach these features as they occur.



1. <sup>a</sup> pers.	sujeto o atributo		<i>yo</i>		<i>nosotros/as</i>		
	término de preposición		<i>mí (conmigo)</i>				
2. <sup>a</sup> pers.	sujeto o atributo		<i>tú, vos*</i>		<i>vosotros/as*</i>		
	término de preposición		<i>ti (contigo), vos*</i>				
3. <sup>a</sup> pers.	sujeto o atributo	masc.	<i>él</i>	<i>usted**</i>	<i>ellos</i>	<i>ustedes**</i>	
		fem.	<i>ella</i>		<i>ellas</i>		
	sujeto		neutro	<i>ello</i>		—	
	término de preposición	masc.	<i>él</i>	<i>usted**</i>	<i>ellos</i>	<i>ustedes**</i>	
		fem.	<i>ella</i>		<i>ellas</i>		
		neutro		<i>ello</i>			—
término de preposición exclusivamente reflexivo		<i>sí (consigo)</i>					

FORMAS DE LOS PRONOMBRES PERSONALES ÁTONOS				
PERSONA GRAMATICAL		SINGULAR	PLURAL	
1. <sup>a</sup> pers.		<i>me</i>	<i>nos</i>	
2. <sup>a</sup> pers.		<i>te</i>	<i>os*</i>	
3. <sup>a</sup> pers.	compl. directo	masc.	<i>lo</i> (también <i>le</i> ; → <a href="#">LEÍSMO, 2</a> )	<i>los</i>
		fem.	<i>la</i>	<i>las</i>
	compl. directo o atributo	neutro	<i>lo</i>	—
	compl. indirecto		<i>le</i> (o <i>se</i> ante otro pron. átono; → <a href="#">se, 1a</a> )	<i>les</i> (o <i>se</i> ante otro pron. átono; → <a href="#">se, 1a</a> )
	forma reflexiva		<i>se</i>	

	sujeto o atributo	yo	
--	-------------------	----	--

1

2

3

pe

You can also split the object pronoun paradigm:

1. Teach *me*, *te*, and *nos* first. These never vary.
2. Then, teach *le/les*.
3. Then, teach *lo/la/los/las*.
4. Then, teach *se*.
5. Then, teach ditransitives that take an indirect and a direct clitic together.
6. Teach the remaining, less frequent ones as they occur

Split this paradigm!

	átono; → <u>se</u> , <u>la</u> )	pron. átono; → <u>se</u> , <u>la</u> )
forma reflexiva	<i>se</i>	

otro

# 3

Give explicit, but targeted, instruction.

- Show the learners 10 or more examples of the targeted structure.
- Ask them to identify the pattern.
- Help them conceptualize as needed.
- Warn them how their own processing strategies may backfire on them.

[After receiving comprehensible input containing 13 examples, the instructor asks:]

1. *How do you form the first person singular (I) form of the present tense in Spanish?*
- Paseo a los perros, desayuno y luego viajo al trabajo.
  - Trabajo de 8 a 4:30.
  - Almuerzo sobre las 2.
  - Escribo reportes.
  - Cuando vuelvo a casa, preparo la cena, ordeno y limpio.

[After learners answer the question, the instructor may or may not go over this, depending on the quality of their answers.]

1. *No matter what type of verb you use (-ar, -er, or -ir), the first person singular almost always ends in -o.*

pasear

Paseo a los perros

desayunar

Desayuno.

viajar

Luego viajo al trabajo.

trabajar

Trabajo de 8 a 4:30.

almorzar

Almuerzo sobre las 2.

escribir

Escribo reportes.

volver

Vuelvo a casa.

preparar

Preparo la cena

ordenar

Ordeno y limpio.

limpiar

[The instructor then reminds the students of the differences between reflexive and non-reflexive verbs.]

2. *What do you do if a verb needs se, like levantarse or acostarse?*

[The explicit warning that their processing strategies may backfire comes here.]

## 2. *You must include me.*

levantarse      Me levanto temprano.

acostarse      Me acuesto sobre las 10.

reunirse      Me reúno con mis colegas después de trabajar.

¡OJO! *You may be tempted to think that me means I because it comes first, but that's incorrect. The -o on the end of the verb means I. Me means myself.*

Me levanto temprano.

[*I lift myself early.*] → *I get up early.*

Me acuesto temprano.

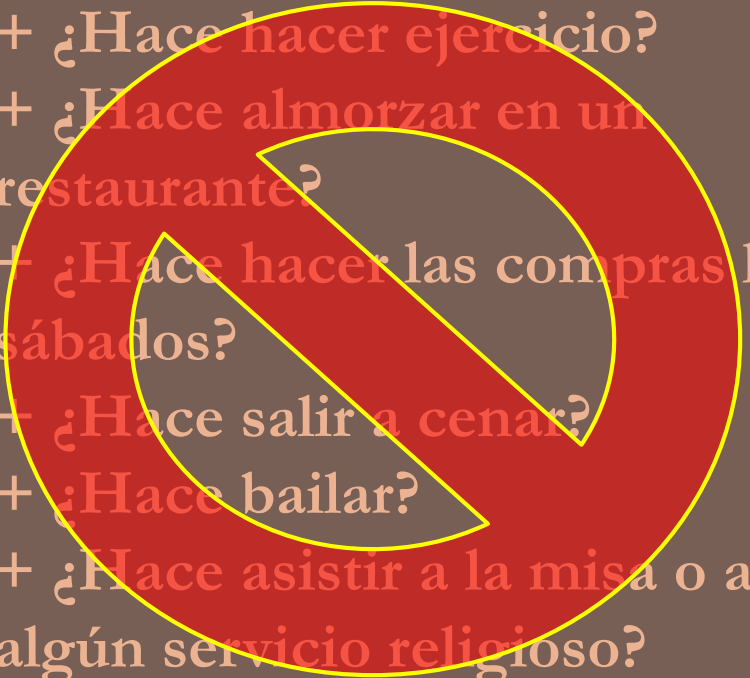
[*I lay myself down early.*] → *I go to bed early.*



*Most times **yes or no** questions do not look any different from statements. When you pronounce them, you use raising intonation to indicate that the sentence is a question. If you need to use **usted** to clarify, you put it after the verb. Use **usted** only if you need to clarify.*

- + ¿Hace [usted] ejercicio?
- + ¿Almuerza [usted] en un restaurante?
- + ¿Hace [usted] las compras los sábados?
- + ¿Sale [usted] a cenar?
- + ¿Baila [usted]?
- + ¿Asiste [usted] a la misa o a algún servicio religioso?

**¡OJO!** Yes or no questions in English require *do* at the beginning (*Do you go out to dinner?*). You may be tempted to do this in Spanish, but **do not**. ***Not only is it incorrect, but the person you're talking to will not understand you.***

- 
- + ¿Hace hacer ejercicio?
  - + ¿Hace almorzar en un restaurante?
  - + ¿Hace hacer las compras los sábados?
  - + ¿Hace salir a cenar?
  - + ¿Hace bailar?
  - + ¿Hace asistir a la misa o a algún servicio religioso?

- + ¿Hace ejercicio?
- + ¿Almuerza en un restaurante?
- + ¿Hace las compras los sábados?
- + ¿Sale a cenar?
- + ¿Baila?
- + ¿Asiste a la misa o a algún servicio religioso?

# 4

Draw their attention to the  
middles of utterances.

- Remove adverbs of time from the input when working on distinguishing present from past.
- Remove unnecessary subject pronouns (their constant use is inauthentic and ungrammatical anyway in Spanish).
- Remove the prepositional phrase with *a* often used with *gustar* and other verbs of this type (~~*A Luis le gusta...*~~).
- Break utterances in half and have learners join the fragments back together.

Yo



Otro profesor

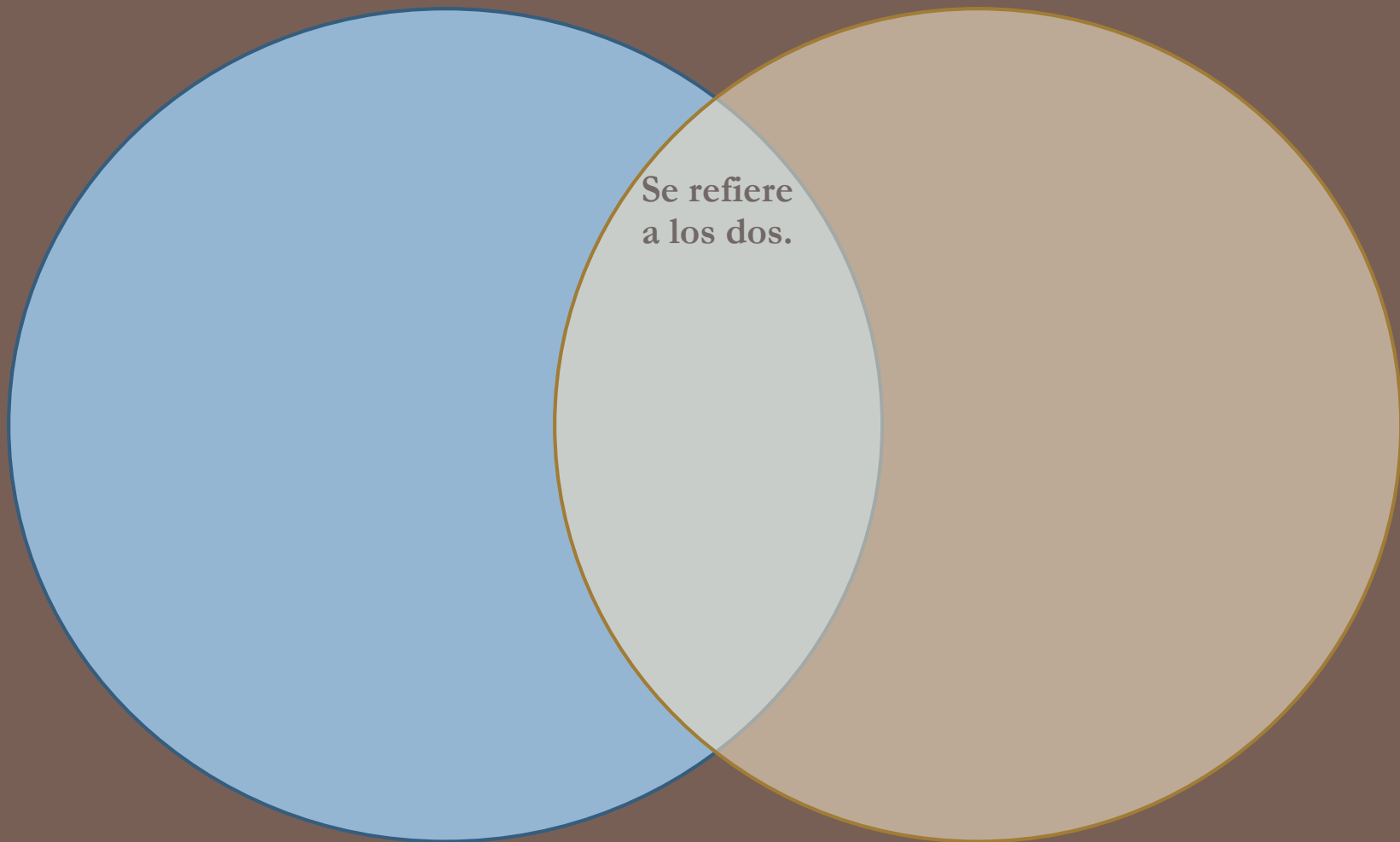






Se refiere a la señora Díaz.

Se refiere al sargento Díaz.



Se refiere a la señora Díaz.

Se refiere al sargento Díaz.

1. Trabajan de 8 a 5.
2. Salen sobre las 7:30.
3. Trabaja en la base militar.
4. Lee y escribe reportes en su oficina.
5. Vuelven a casa sobre las 5:30.
6. Ayudan a sus hijos con la tarea.
7. Se entrena para sus misiones.
8. Conoce muy bien a los demás soldados con quienes trabaja.
9. Almuerza en la oficina. No vuelve a casa.
10. A veces se reúnen con sus colegas después de trabajar para tomar una copa.

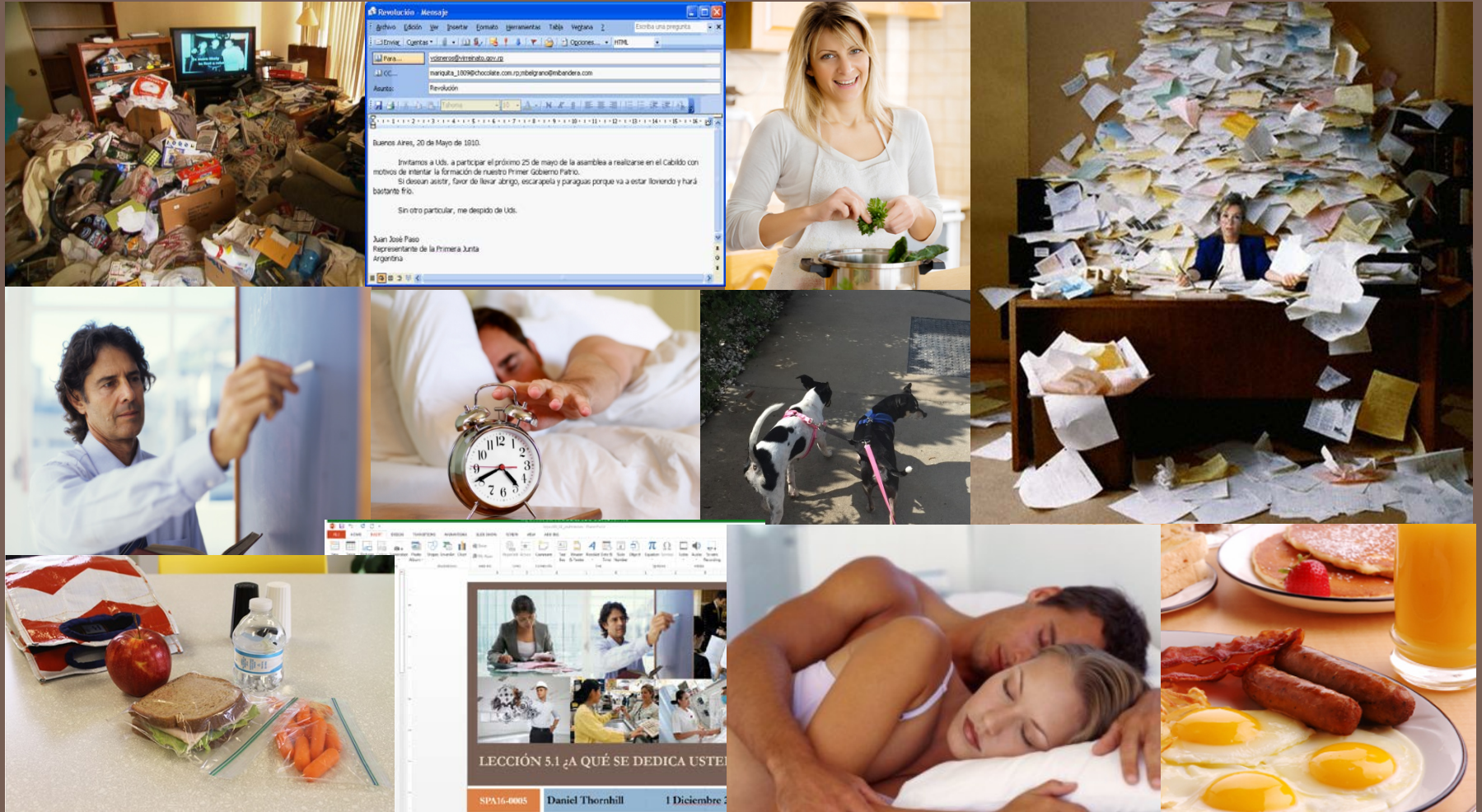


## A. El profesor

1. ayuda...
2. desarrolla...
3. viaja...
4. desayuna...
5. enseña...
6. aconseja...
7. cena...
8. trabaja...

## B.

- a. ... sus lecciones.
- b. ... a sus estudiantes a aprender el español.
- c. ... 15 minutos al trabajo.
- d. ... en la base aérea MacDill.
- e. a otros profesores.
- f. ... enchiladas y ensalada.
- g. ... en el salón de clase virtual.
- h. ... fruta y café.

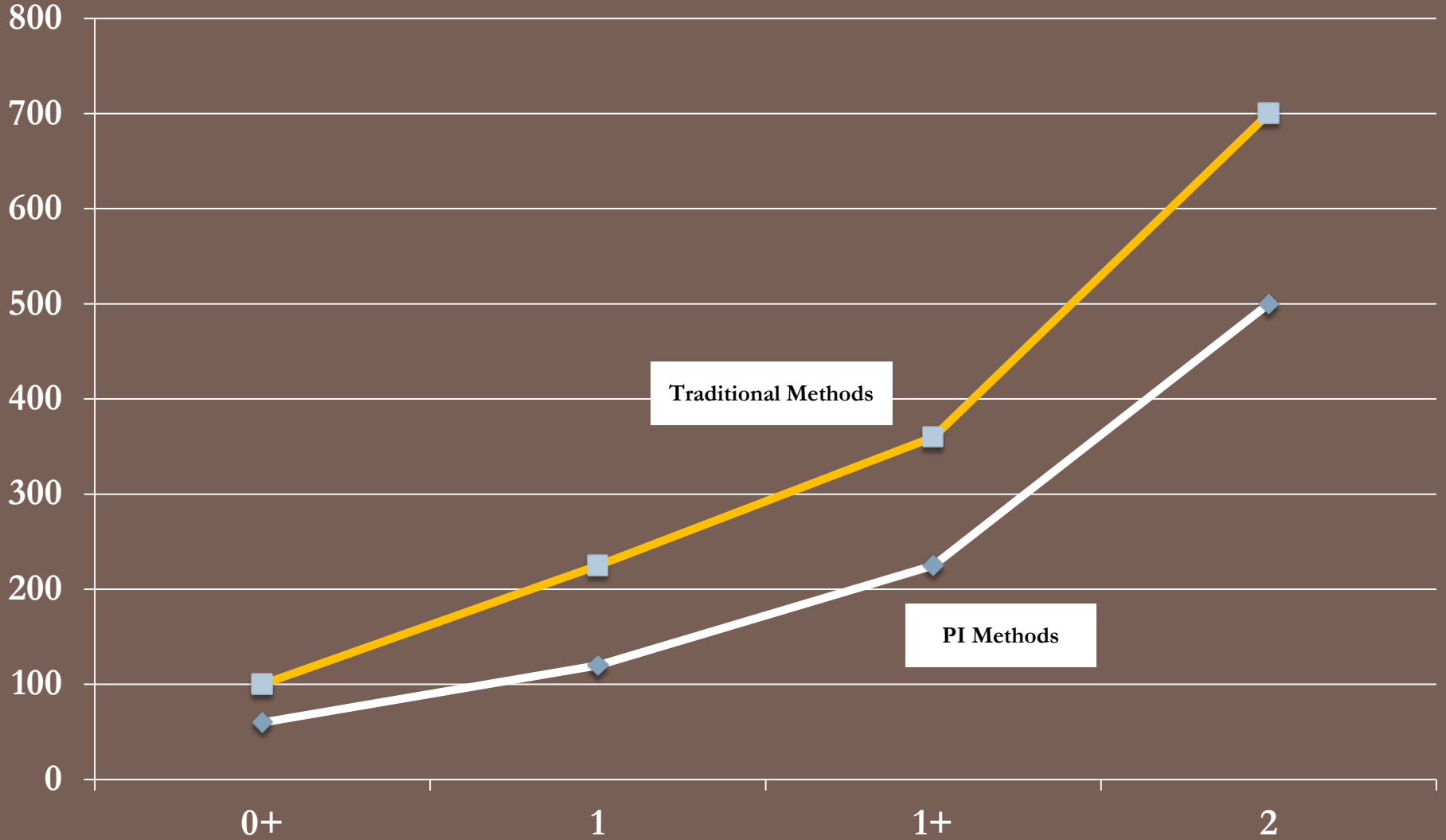


Tips 4/5 Example: *Listen to the description and put the activities in order. One activity is mentioned twice.*

1. If you want to teach grammar, you must do it with words the learners already know.
2. Present one thing at a time - break up those paradigms.
3. Give explicit, but targeted, instruction.
4. Draw their attention to the middles of utterances.

So what?

# Instructional hours to reach ILR levels 0+ to 2



- Slabakova, R. (2008). *Meaning in the second language*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- VanPatten, B. (2017). *While we're on the topic*. Alexandria, VA: The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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