

## **The Reading Program - What It Is and Why It Works Languages**

### **The Spanish Version**

At the beginning of this chapter I asked, “What’s the hardest thing you ever had to learn?” My answer to my own question was the hardest thing you ever had to learn was the language that you now speak.

In [Chapter 10 - The Ten No’s](#), I told the story of the child in kindergarten who spoke English with me, Hindi with her grandmother and Icelandic with her teachers. The point I was making was that any child who can hear can learn to speak whatever language or languages are spoken.

The reason the Reading Program makes learning to read and to write as easy and as natural for children as it was for them to learn the language(s) they now speak is because the Program uses the same learning process for reading as the children used for speaking. In speaking, children learn to put sounds together to make words. In learning to read, children start at the same place they did in learning to speak. They put sounds together to make words.

In [The One Suggestion for Improvement](#) section of [Chapter 12 - Don’t Take Our Word For It](#), I said that the only suggestion we received for improving the Program during our 2,048 kit ten-year study was from English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. Their suggestion was for the Center to make a Spanish version of the Program that they could then use alongside the English version with their ESL students.

Regardless of the language to be learned, children learn it in the same way – putting sounds together to make words. The kindergarten child in Iceland did not have to learn a whole new set of sounds for each language that she spoke. The different languages spoken all over the world have many sounds in common. All she had to do was put the sounds together differently for each language, just as she already had to put them together differently to form each word.

With the help of several ESL teachers, we created a Spanish version of the Program. Both languages could now be taught side-by-side to everyone in class, regardless of his or her native language.

In [Chapter 12](#), it was noted that the Spanish language uses twenty-three sounds, not forty-four. Twenty-one of the twenty-three are sounds are also used in English. Adding just two new sounds meant that all the sounds of Spanish were now available for every child to put together to make words.

Below is an example of the Reading Program sounds put together to make words in three languages.

Actually, there is a sound in the Spanish word for 4 that is not one of Dekodiphukan's 44. The fourth sound from the right is one of the two sounds we added to the create the Spanish version of the program.

|     | English | Spanish | Hindi |
|-----|---------|---------|-------|
| 1 = |         |         |       |
| 2 = |         |         |       |
| 3 = |         |         |       |
| 4 = |         |         |       |

The Spanish version of the program uses the same format as the English version: Picture Packets, Worksheets, Books, Handwriting and Decoding, and Stamping and Creative Writing. Pictured below are its stamping tray and decoding chart:



### **The Sounds of Language**

The Reading Program teaches children to read and write in English because that is the language I learned growing up and because it is the language I know best. The reason we were able to make a Spanish version of the Program is because the ESL teachers who wanted the Program helped us create it.

Two additional sounds were needed for Spanish. How many sounds are unique to Hindi, or Japanese, or Russian, or Chinese, or Arabic? The different languages I have heard in the thirty-six different countries to which my travels have taken me, give me the impression that there are more sounds in common in all the languages on earth than there are sounds that are unique.

Infants are born with the capability of making every sound of every language. They learn to imitate the sounds they hear around them. As they age, the capability of making the language sounds they have not heard gradually fades away. It is my understanding that children who learn a language before they are seven will speak it without an accent like a native speaker. Languages learned later are the ones spoken with the accent that gives the speaker what we call a foreign accent.

Imagine a teaching world where there is a set of sound pictures that encompass the sounds of every different language. The kindergarten child who spoke three languages could not yet read the written words in each of those languages. English and Icelandic share an alphabet that Hindi does not use. What made it possible for her to learn all three languages was because she was learning the sounds of words and not the letters used to spell them. Imagine a set of sounds available to learners everywhere that encompasses every language. Perhaps someday imaginers might make it happen.