



What exactly is Occupational Spanish?

Occupational Spanish is the newest field of Spanish language instruction. Developed initially in the 1980s by Dr. Sam Slick in conjunction with the Police Training Academy at Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas, it quickly became the primary training methodology for public safety officials across the United States. In 1985, Dr. Slick founded Command SpanishÆ, Inc. and began developing additional occupational Spanish training materials for professions outside the field of public safety. In 1990, Dr. Slick joined forces with Dr. Maryjane Dunn who then was the department chair of modern languages at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha, Nebraska, and who was simultaneously developing occupational Spanish programming for the Omaha Fire Department and its EMS services.

By 1992, it became apparent to Drs. Slick and Dunn that in order to deliver high quality, consistent, and effective occupational Spanish training to any profession, Spanish teachers (and qualified Spanish-speakers) required additional training themselves in order to appropriately teach adult professionals what they need to know to say in Spanish. Accordingly, that year Drs. Slick and Dunn, using Command SpanishÆ materials as a vehicle, began offering professional training seminars for persons interested in becoming certified in occupational Spanish training methodologies.

These seminars proved to be eye-openers for many of the attendees because, while the axioms of occupational Spanish are deceptively simple, they differ radically from traditional academic Spanish language classes. The following are the most salient features of occupational Spanish training:

1. This is Spanish for adults who already (or will in the future) need to speak to Spanish-speakers in the United States.
2. In occupational Spanish training it is understood that the roles of both the English- and Spanish-speakers are clearly defined, and their linguistic interchanges are brief in nature, based only on momentary interfaces. The English-speaker needs only enough Spanish to effectively, efficiently, professionally, and politely accomplish the job task at

market, evacuate a burning building, evaluate a patient's physical condition, or request that an employee carry out a task.

3. The Spanish commands, statements and questions are highly focused and specific to the occupational role of the adult learner. Occupational Spanish is often incorrectly call "workplace Spanish"; this implies that all persons at the same worksite have the same relationship and linguistic needs. This is not usually the case. In a warehouse operation a human resources manager will have different communication needs than the warehouse supervisor; within a hospital a Certified Nursing Assistant, a Licensed Vocational Nurse, and a Registered Nurse all care for patients, but the levels of care they provide (and subsequently their language needs) differ according to their training.
4. Occupational Spanish courses must be non-grammar-based. Occupational Spanish should be approached as a psychomotor skill, rather than as a cognitive talent. Trained occupational Spanish instructors learn how to provide psychomotor instruction in their classrooms to activate memory burn. They must know how to manage a course compatible with brain-based learning theories and activities.
5. Because in most job-related communication between English- and Spanish-speakers adults communicate orally, all occupational Spanish instruction, practice, and testing must be oral-aural. Pen and paper exercises and tests do not reflect real-world, on-the-job language usage.
6. Instead of working for grades, adult learners participate actively to achieve specific, performance-based standards, goals, and objectives.

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These axioms, pioneered by Command SpanishÆ, Inc. have come to represent the gold standard in occupational Spanish certification and training.

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To learn more about certification as an occupational Spanish instructor see the Command SpanishÆ website at: www.commandspanish.com