



Video Story Transcript

How Do You Say Blueberry In Spanish?

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Link to YouTube Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhfyaV3clZw>

Note : The following is a transcription of a spoken story performance and may not reflect textbook perfect English. It will guide you as you listen (or read) along.

Hi, my name is Antonio Sacre. Have you ever felt in your head that what you were doing was right but in your heart, you weren't so sure? When my son was born, my wife and I decided we were going to speak to him in English and Spanish. So, my wife would sing and talk to him in English, and I would sing and talk to my son in Spanish.

And as the months went by and he began to crawl, we began to think, "What will his first word be? Will it be in English? Mommy. Or Spanish? Papa. Cat or Gato?"

And when he was about 9 or 10 months he said his first word. "Ba." I said to my wife, "What did he say?" She said, "I think he said, 'Ba.'" Ok, it wasn't English or Spanish but it was a clearly enunciated syllable.

And we knew from our parenting books that real speech was not too far behind. And it was cute. The first few things that he said was "Ba" for everything. Cat-"Ba," dog-"Ba," Mommy-"Ba," Daddy-"Ba," fire truck-"Ba, ba, ba, ba, ba, ba, ba." And we would laugh. Now after a while, it was still just "ba" and I was beginning to get a little worried, although I didn't say anything about that to my wife.

Then our neighbor, Catherine, came over. She's a high school teacher in the Los Angeles school district and she has a couple kids. She lives just, lives a couple homes up; we love her. And she asked, innocently enough, "So is your son speaking any words yet?"

I said, "Yeah, yeah. Watch this. What do baseball players play with, Honey?"

"Ba."

"That's right. A bat. And what you take before you go to sleep? A..."

“Ba.”

“That’s right a bath. And what’s on the other side of your chest?”

“Ba.”

“What’s the opposite of good?”

“Ba.”

“What’s Ebenezer Scrooge’s favorite word?”

“Ba.”

“What’s the chemical symbol for Barium?”

“Ba.”

“What difficult exam do lawyers need to pass?”

“Ba.”

“See Catherine, my son is a genius!” and we had a huge laugh about it. And Catherine left and that night, though, I sat my wife down after we put our son to sleep. And I said, “Ya know? Maybe we’re not doing the right thing. Maybe he’s confused? Maybe we should just speak to him in English and then he’ll learn Spanish as he got older?”

My wife said, “No, absolutely not! We are going to raise him bilingually.” I love that about her. Things that, in my heart, I wasn’t sure that we doing the right thing for our son. And I decided that we would continue to speak to him bilingually at least until we saw our pediatrician in a couple of months.

Now the reason that this was part of our discussion about raising our son is that my father is from Cuba. And when he came here, he didn’t have any English and it was so hard for him. And all my life growing up I heard about how great it would have been if he had been bilingual. He did learn English eventually, and he met my mom who is Irish American. So, I’m Cuban Irish American. Or like a friend of mine calls me a leprechauno.

I grew up speaking both Spanish and English because my grandmother lived with us. She came from Cuba, as well, and only spoke Spanish. So in my life, I was bilingual. When I got to be about 6 or 7, I stopped speaking Spanish because kids at school made fun of me. And when I got older, that precious gift of speaking those two languages, was gone. Now luckily for me, my grandmother made sure that I continued to speak Spanish. And as a high school student, I learned Spanish from her. And so all of this was part of my background. We wanted to raise our son in these two languages. I knew how important it was but I still was worried about his ability to communicate.

So then we went to see the pediatrician. Dr. George is so sweet and he looked at our son and checked him out. Everything was fine. And then I said to him that I was a little worried about his language. And he said, “No, no, no!” He was adamant that we raise son our son in two languages. He said that kids that have two languages, of course, get to communicate with more people. But, also, there is a lot of research that supports that when they are raised bilingually, their brains are actually stronger in many other functions; not just language.

I had doctor’s orders. Raise my son in two languages. That made me feel a little better. And a few weeks after that visit, my son actually spoke his first word. He said, clear as day, “ball.” Oh, we were so excited! And it

was a few... couple days after that, he began to speak more words and then it came in like a flood. Words in both English and in Spanish. It was fantastic! And whenever he said a word in English, I made sure that he knew the Spanish equivalent. So when he said "ball," I said "pelota." And when he said, "Thanks," I said, "Gracias." And when he said, "Fire truck!" I said, "Camión de bomberos." And when he said, "Blueberry," I said, "Variedad de arándano que es azul." Why does Spanish need thirteen syllables to say blueberry? I called my dad, "How do you say blueberry?" He said, "Mi hijo," which means my son, "we didn't have blueberries in Cuba." So I looked it up in the dictionary and it says variedad de arándano que es azul, a variety of cranberry that is blue. Ah! It's driving me crazy!

But there are some words in Spanish that are so beautiful in Spanish they don't translate into English. And the way my father says to his grandson, "Mi tesoro, mi vida, mi alma, mi corazón," my love, my heart, my treasure, my soul. It really means, Sweetie or Honey but it doesn't really translate. And the specificity of English is amazing. We have blueberries and boysenberries and blackberries and raspberries and strawberries. And in Spanish they are just arándanos (berries). So I want my son to have those two languages.

It was pretty exciting! And as we are going along, my son and I would make up our own vernacular. So I have a little watch alarm and it went off one day and my son says, "Oye, Papa, que es eso?" (What is that?) And I didn't know how to say the watch alarm that chimes on the hour.

So, I said, "Suenan las campanas." It just came to my mind. I didn't know exactly what it meant. And a few weeks later, I was with my dad and my son and my little watch alarm went off.

And my son said, "Abuelo, suenan las campanas."

And my dad started laughing. I said, "What, what did he say?"

He said, "Mi hijo, it doesn't really translate but what your son said to me was, 'Granddad, the bell tolls for thee.'"

So now whenever we hear a bell or a bong or a horn, my son says, "Suenan las campanas, the bell tolls for thee!" And so my dad now calls my son, Campanas, (Bell). The first of many nicknames my son is gonna have from my dad as he grows up - a Cuban tradition!

Well, now that my son is older and we're beginning to think about school for him, I have discovered dual language programs. Dual language programs are when the kids study half the day, or more or less, in one language and half the day in English. It could be Spanish or Japanese or Chinese - whatever it is. Now in Los Angeles, ironically, there are a lot of dual language programs but none close to our house. And the ones that we can get into in other districts are very far away. But I still think this is what's right. I actually did some research and I found out that the research team of Thomas and Collier state that kids' tests scores are actually higher in junior high if they study in both languages. And we wanted that for our son. Well, I mentioned that to Catherine, our neighbor, and I said, "You know what, the waiting lists are really long and they are really far away."

And she said, "Oh, no! Your son doesn't have to be on the waiting list because he speaks both languages already. He's at an advantage because of that." And then I knew in my heart we were doing the right thing. And then she said, "Why don't you send him to our local elementary school?"

And we said, "We'd love to but it just doesn't have a dual language program. That's a huge part of what we want." A week later she called us and said she had marched down to the principal's office and said that if they wanted, they could institute a dual language program. I never thought...it never even occurred to me to do that. And here's this neighbor doing that for us, for our family. And a month after that, there was a meeting at

the school about possibly instituting this dual language program. I was moved by Catherine's desire to help us, to help the neighborhood. Now will that dual language program go? I don't know. But I'm moved by Catherine's work and by the neighborhood and the principal.

And like my dad said, "Centavo a centavo se llena elsaco." Penny by penny, we fill the sack.